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Middlesex University, London & Ashridge Business School, Berkhamsted

Enriching organisations:

*A personal exploration into putting human
flourishing at the heart of my work.*

by Robert Atkinson

Thesis for a

**Doctoral Degree in Professional Practice (Organisational Change), from
Middlesex University, London**

March 2019

**Dedicated to my wife Adriana, and my daughters Zoia and Vida;
they really are my “three perfections in completely different styles”.¹**

And with a message:

“Create all the happiness you are able to create: remove all the misery you are able to remove. Every day will allow you to add something to the pleasure of others, or to diminish something of their pains. And for every grain of enjoyment you sow in the bosom of another, you shall find a harvest in your own bosom; while every sorrow which you pluck out from the thoughts and feelings of a fellow creature shall be replaced by beautiful peace and joy in the sanctuary of your soul.”

Jeremy Bentham in a birthday letter to a friend’s daughter, 22nd June, 1830.²

¹ Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne (‘Belgian’ soldier, statesman, writer, and gardener; 1735-1814) when speaking of his daughters (Mansell, 2003, p.180).

² Layard, 2011, p.235-236.

Abstract

As we spend much of our lives working, the premise of this thesis is that work ought to be a central facet of an enriching, flourishing life. Yet the prevalent experience of work is seemingly the opposite; with confining, unfair, or simply mediocre organisational processes and practices ostensibly the norm. Personal anecdotes and organisational surveys reveal a threnody of disengaged staff, toxic bosses and limited growth opportunities. The result, a palpable *knock-on* towards organisational efficiency, effectiveness and creativity; and more widely to personal relationships, families, and society.

This thesis explores how we might place human flourishing at the heart of work by addressing three core inquiry questions: 1). What constitutes human flourishing? 2). How do we flourish (at work)? 3). How can organisations foster human flourishing? Utilising various forms of first- and second-person action research, a pragmatic and evolving constructivist research approach draws from personal reflection, peer inquiry, literature, and case studies to explore these inquiry questions.

A personal motif of *Purpose, Place, and Practice (PPP)* is introduced as a device, or lens, to reveal and consider both principle and practice aspects of workplace flourishing. The thesis relates an extended *conversation* on the researcher's own career and working experiences, both as a civil society actor and an organisational development (OD) consultant. Through these explorations this motif is deepened to present a potential *compass* for determining personal and organisational directions for workplace flourishing.

The outcomes are varied, matching the nature of the exploration, including: an operative *notion of workplace flourishing*, the identification of key *enrichers* and *diminishers*, further development of the inquirer's OD practice, and a nascent set of *organising principles for an enriching organisation*. Moreover, as an offer to others, the inquirer reflects on the learning and new meaning he developed regarding his own workplace flourishing. Thereby highlighting, beyond organisational conditions, the personal engagement and responsibility that is also required for us to flourish at work.

Notes

I. – Acknowledgements

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The wider Ashridge community and the ADOC4 cohort have provided the crucible for doing this research. I would like to thank them all, but especially my fellow Supervision Group members, Jim Cookson and Dr Pleuntje van Meer. They shared their views, their opinions, their experiences, and sometimes their tears. I also want to thank my colleagues in my ADOC4 Module 3 Team: Dr Katherine

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Mainly, this thesis is dedicated to my family for putting up with me over the years of its inception, research, and development. Deprived of the fun and inquisitive spirit of my two daughters, Zoia and Vida, I doubt I could have kept going. Principally though, without the ever-present love and support of my wife Adriana, and her belief in me, my opportunities to flourish both personally and professionally would forever be diminished.



II. – Glossary of terms

Capacity Building: Includes ‘...the funding and technical assistance to help nonprofits increase specific capacities to deliver stronger programs, take risks, build connections, innovate and iterate’ (GEO, n.d.). Though, in my opinion, capacity building tends to be mainly orientated around training-focused activities for groups or individuals, or technical fixes.

Civil Society: The notion of ‘A harmonious social order, free of both exploitation and oppression’ (Gellner, 1996, p.2), found ‘...in the idea of institutional and ideological pluralism, which prevents the establishment of monopoly of power and truth, and counterbalances those of central institutions which, though necessary, might otherwise acquire such monopoly’ (Gellner, 1996, p.3-4).

Happiness: A sensation that we call happiness and ‘by happiness I mean feeling good – enjoying life and wanting the feeling to be maintained’ (Layard, 2011, p.12). Rather nicely the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges once observed: “The word happiness exists in every language; it is plausible the thing itself exists”, it couples well with Daniel Haybron’s assertion that: ‘...people use it all the time to think and talk about things they care about’ (2013, p.10).

Human Flourishing: There are numerous definitions and this thesis looks in detail at human flourishing in the context of work in Chapters 3., and 4. It is often equated with the Greek word *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, *The Nicomachean ethics*, 2009). However, my simple working definition is ‘Happiness [and] well-being consisting in the full realization of human potential’ (amended entry for *eudaimonia* from Brown, 1993, p.859).

Non-Governmental Organisation: An organisation officially registered as such or an otherwise clearly identifiable group of citizens or other public association that: does not act as an official governmental body; is a not-for-profit entity (i.e. non-commercial); functions at the local, regional, national and/or international level; has an identifiable purpose or purposes that defines its activity; and has a presence in public life, outside of family structures, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, or philanthropic considerations (adapted from: Crăciun, Lardinois, & Atkinson, 2009, p.49).

Organisation: Here understood as a formalised grouping of people that is a legal entity operating with a particular purpose or mission.

Organisational Development: I subscribe to the following: *‘OD is a long-range effort to improve an organization’s problem solving and renewal processes... with the assistance of a change agent or catalyst, and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioural science, including action research’* (Cheung-Judge and Holbech, 2011, p.11).

Single & double loop feedback: *‘...single-loop feedback is feedback through which one learns that one’s actions are not achieving a pre-established goal, and then ‘proves’ one’s learning by adjusting one’s actions to increase the likelihood of achieving the goal’, while ‘with double-loop feedback one learns that the structure of one’s strategic, goal-seeking, status-maintaining system is problematic. Double-loop feedback enables individuals and organisations to learn through examining alternative policies and objectives from new perspectives rather than to simply improve ways of functioning within present perspectives’* (Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2003, p.69).

Social Capital: Networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups. (OECD, 2001, p 41.).

Subjective Well-being: is well-being measured *‘on the basis of how we feel about ourselves and how we are doing’* (What Works Wellbeing, n.d.). In many subjective well-being measures it is often divided into at least two categories hedonic or eudaimonic well-being; sometimes also called: emotive/emotional/feeling and psychological/functioning.

Subsidiarity: A political organising principle that states that all matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralised competent authority. In organisations I consider this means that decisions should be devolved to the place where they make most sense, in essence it is a position that will ensure meaningful autonomy and choice for workers and reduce the usual approach of continually sending decisions up to higher authorities.

Well-being: Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders have stated that *‘the question of how [well-being] should be defined remains unanswered’* (2012, p.222). Indeed, while there is much talk about well-being, there is not much consensus about what it represents. Still, they proffer a definition of well-being as *being ‘the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced’* (p.230, my emphasis), which has resonance within this thesis.

Work: Herein I follow that work is *‘the activity deployed by men and women in order to achieve the objectives determined by the prescriptions of a hierarchy or by the terms of a contract’* (Deranty, 2010,

p.183). Although I am conscious that *work* also encompasses non-formal occupations outside of an organisational compass.

III. – Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADOC	Ashridge Doctorate in Organisational Change
AMSR	Ashridge Masters in Sustainability and Responsibility
AR	Action Research
BTW	By the way
CB	Capacity Building
CE	Common Era (previously A.D., <i>Anno Domini</i>).
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CV	<i>Curriculum Vitae</i>
EO	Enriching Organisation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HBR	Harvard Business Review
HF	Human Flourishing
HR	Human Resources
IHEU	International Humanist and Ethical Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation (formerly Office)
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
IO	International Organisation
MBA	Master in Business Administration
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service

OD	Organisational Development
ODP	Organisational Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPA	Organisational Pre-Assessment
OSA	Organisational Self-Assessment
OVT	Organisational Viability Toolkit
PO	Project Officer
<i>PPP</i>	Purpose, Place, Practice
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
REC	Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SWB	Subjective Well-being
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN(O)	United Nations (Organisation)
USA	United States of America
VP	Vice-President
WEA	Work Enrichment Approaches
WEF	World Economic Forum

IV. – Ethical considerations

My inquiry was formed around how I can explore, and perhaps enact, what is essentially *my* research agenda, and, as only in some work settings could this agenda be made fully explicit, there was the potential for ethical or conflict of interest issues to arise. So before plunging into the text itself I feel it necessary to clarify the ethical considerations at this early stage. Indeed, any research project that involves other people and their actions necessarily requires the presentation, interpretation and judgement of others and this presents potential ethical difficulties. As a consultant on organisational issues, I am caught in both *insider* and *outsider* realms, adding an extra veneer to the ‘*three challenges*’ to insider inquiry noted by Holian and Coghlan (2013, p.401); those aspects of role duality/ambiguity, commercial confidence, and power/coercion issues.

Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) give warning of the many ethically related issues in the nature of knowledge and power relations. I note that the issues expressed, with regard to a ‘*positivist knowledge production*’ approach (p.74), include: reality distortion, reinforcement of passivity, and the privileged researcher (bias and coercion), could have been potential problems if I, and the research practice I followed, had not been *awareful* enough to resist backsliding. This is especially pertinent to me, as it would have been quite wrong to look into human flourishing in a way that may undermine another’s opportunity to do so.³ In a sense by compromising the *enriching spirit* I wished for my inquiry. Several ways for ameliorating this possibility were followed that implied acting reasonably and responsibly as well as ethically:

- Any person (or person representing an organisation) that was invited to be involved within the formal explicit inquiry (such as the *Peer Inquiry Group*⁴) was informed of its potential use and was formally asked to agree to participate, with a confirmation in writing (inspired by chapter 5 of McNiff & Whitehead, 1996).
- Any direct quotes of people’s words or opinions, citing their identity, were formally approved of before use. If the subject did not want to be identified then they were either rendered anonymous or were removed and remained unused, depending on the wishes of the participant (following Holian & Coghlan, 2013, p.405). In addition, I wish to stress that, in those sections

³ What Holian & Coghlan might phrase as ‘well being’ (2013, p.400).

⁴ A group of eight professionals who have contributed to the inquiry.

where peoples' words or actions are alluded to, the interpretation of their meaning and import is all mine.

- All persons and organisation that are from outside the explicit inquiry process were made anonymous - '*beyond anonymity*' (Holian & Coghlan, 2013, p.407) - by the use of pseudonyms (i.e., organisations were allocated planet names and were identified and located differently). This was supported by an ethics statement that I adhered to in order to protect third parties (Annex 0.1).
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Introduction

'In the last hundred years there has been a growing realization of a sickness in our society and that one source of this sickness is the relationship of people to their work.' (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1993, p.128)

The genesis of my inquiries into work⁵ and, what is called, *human flourishing*⁶ has undeniably originated within my own career experiences and connected personal work aspirations. I've reflected how, varying over time, location, or expectation, I've experienced both unfulfilling-diminishing and inspiring-uplifting times. Spanning the sweet and bitter ends of that spectrum, I've realised the profound impact that work experiences have on our lives. Seeing for myself, my colleagues, and the civil society organisations⁷ (CSOs) that I support, how rather too often such experiences were negative or adverse.

Indeed, surveys, media reports, and personal anecdotes abound with incidences of dissatisfied or disengaged staff; where workplace practices go from the retrograde to the downright nasty (working practices at Amazon's Swansea warehouse were once described as *'all the bad stuff at once'*, increasing the *'risk of mental illness and physical illness'* (BBC News, 2013)). The effect of these, as Herzberg *et al.*, convey above, somehow materialises as a corrosive sickness in the world of organised work:

'Of the approximately 100 million people in America who hold full-time jobs ... [there are] are roughly 20 million (20%) employees who are actively disengaged. These employees, who have bosses from hell that make them miserable, roam the halls spreading discontent. The other 50 million (50%) American workers are not engaged. They're just kind of present, but not inspired by their work or their managers.' (Gallup, 2013, p.4)⁸

I find it appalling that a vast proportion of us apparently spend a large part of our working lives either marking time or being tormented by it. A wasting of personal opportunity represented by the all too familiar threnody of disengaged staff, toxic bosses, and limited prospects. Where those being

⁵ See glossary.

⁶ See glossary. Explored in detail in Chapters 3., and 4.

⁷ See glossary.

⁸ In Western Europe: 19% are actively disengaged, 71% are not engaged, and only 10% are actively engaged. A staggering 90% have no engagement with their work (Helliwell, J., Layard, R., & Sachs, J., (Eds.), 2017, p.162); see also *Work makes people miserable* (Cronin, 2013).

diminished bring their dissatisfaction out from their workplaces to their families, friends, and wider relationships. To me, it marks an organisational failure, in terms of lost creativity, effectiveness or efficiency, and a social malaise, when considering the negative bearing on the dignity and fulfilment of working people. Surprisingly in my civil society field, where one might expect organisations that epitomise more enlightened work practices, I often meet a similar divergence from those values I believe such a community should hold.

Thomas Paine once observed that '*a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right...*' (2004, p.3), and the sheer commonality of negative or diminishing work experiences appears to fall here. There is an apparent cultural normalcy where work is considered as something of a necessary evil; work as a four-letter word or '*...the curse of Adam*' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.154). With many of us seemingly holding the expectation of discomfort from it or believing that there must be a trade-off between what we want to do and what we have to do. We grumble to our friends about our bosses, rail against unfair decisions, suffer confining work environments, and harp-on about getting a work-life balance - as if work wasn't a part of life - and sometimes, just sometimes, we do something about it and look for other work or new horizons.

It has led me to believe that this apparent normalcy needs challenging. That **work and workplaces should provide experiences that help us to explore our potentials and to fully develop our personalities; that we might be said to flourish**. Indeed, by orientating the concept of human flourishing with my work, as a convenient label, has led me to propose what I've called *enriching organisations*. Something of an organisational ideal inspired by the civil society *milieu* in which I operate, but an ideal that rather serves to scrutinise what organisations might really stand for in relation to their people.

Indeed, such a stance, that work should encompass a locus of meaning and connection, formation and competence, takes, what I call, *workplace flourishing* beyond the commonplace conception of *well-being at work* (often merely equated with health issues) and presents sincere implications for organisational practices. It has meant that my inquiries went beyond simply looking at ridding workplaces of the things that make us *languish* (for those twenty-percent, to equate it with the Gallup poll above⁹), to looking to reveal those ways that the majority of us (the fifty-percent that appear to be just present, treading water in unremarkable work) can exercise our potentials.

⁹ I realise that active engagement and flourishing are not exactly the same, but illustratively it serves quite well.

In writing *War and Peace* Leo Tolstoy famously drew from his own experiences of the Crimean War (1853-1856), as well as primary documents about and interviews with living survivors of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. He tapped into philosophy, history and a whole gamut of source material with which to base his writing. My thesis, while having no illusions to Tolstoy's genius, draws from a similar range of sources: literature, philosophy, research papers, personal recollections, images, client cases, and conversations with colleagues. I believe that such diverse content, from various traditions, and a melding together of differing forms of inquiry was required to cover its involved subject matter. It reflects my inquiry's emergent character and led to, what I now consider was, a pragmatic and constructivist research posture.

Fundamentally though the experiences and lessons from my own work frame this inquiry, in terms of both the problem and my research approach. Hence, while my research process includes a range of sources and characters intertwined within it - some major, some minor, and a wider relevance towards organisational practice - the *plotline* is fundamentally that of my personal exploration. This personal context colours the direction, method, style, and content of the whole piece. Leading to a personally focussed inquiry. How do I flourish? Can my work, that significant facet of my life, be a component of my flourishing? How can the organisations I work with act to support it?

Therefore, the main character in this thesis is myself; the Pierre Bezúkhov if you will, the character whose struggle for personal meaning defines Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (2007).¹⁰ You will encounter me - this middle-aged, civil society consultant - as I relate my reflecting, seeking, considering, and striving for an understanding of my own necessities to flourish professionally. This was done through work case studies and personal reflections, as well as inquiring discussions with my peers.¹¹ Thus, much of what is shown is my *written-personality*, backed by a variety of other voices (diary entries, scenes, *vignettes*) and a sharing of personal imagery that explore my experiences around work and flourishing.

While acknowledging that, my approach provided epistemic challenges. Where different ways of knowing, from positivist research papers to interpretive art work, rub shoulders with one another. It has also meant making choices on form, style and content in the presentation of my research and its outcomes. Indeed, perhaps alluding to those threads, layers, and details that I value in working through

¹⁰ 'What's bad and what's good? What should we love and what should we hate? What is life for, and what am I? What is life? What is death? What kind of force is it that directs everything? He kept asking himself' (Tolstoy, 2007, p.375).

¹¹ An eight-strong *Peer Inquiry Group* was involved across the inquiry.

my ideas, I have grappled with feedback that my writing style sometimes exhibits the stylistic qualities of the *Russian novel*. So, while allowing that '*The leisurely style of the Russian novel must be inappropriate for the busy student of organization theory*' (Handy, 1999, p.26)¹², by being conscious that my written-tone is quite formal, I look to lighten it or guide my reader (e.g. use **bold** to highlight points).

Furthermore, my *lens* for exploring the inquiry's premise, and its supporting questions, has been via a personal motif of **Purpose, Place, and Practice (PPP)**; introduced in the following chapter. **These three facets have, over time, developed to encompass and explain my work motivations, meaning, and personal growth aspirations.** Reference to, and reflection via, them occurs throughout and allows for a harmony across the varied personal and organisational aspects of workplace flourishing that I've considered. As a device for my inquiry it united both my work practice and research approach. Ultimately, it allowed me to engage with my research questions in different ways and from a variety of perspectives.

By way of orientation, this thesis is structured into seven chapters that are further divided into sections covering different elements of each chapter's focus. Chapter 1. **Why this inquiry?** - frames the inquiry further by defining my positions, field, and giving the origins in more detail. Chapter 2. **Research approach** - sets-out my inquiry methods that are used throughout. The subsequent three chapters revolve around the three main inquiry questions that I held (**What is human flourishing? How do we flourish (at work)? How can organisations foster human flourishing?**). They are organised to convey the *discoveries* of my explorations: Chapter 3., elaborates my *notion of workplace flourishing*; Chapter 4., considers the *drivers* and the process of *how* we flourish; and Chapter 5., connects the inquiry to the development of my working practice. Chapter 6. **Bringing the parts together** – incorporates much of the learning from the inquiry by considering how my inquiring *lens (PPP)* has evolved and presents some implications of the inquiry. The final chapter, 7. **Reviewing lessons and learnings** - summarises my personal reflections on where I am *vis-à-vis* my own *workplace flourishing*. Supporting materials are placed within the annexes and a list of references and a wider bibliography are offered.

My exploration related herein has undoubtedly been a part of the process of my own flourishing and has served to re-connect me with my work. Hopefully, when considering the arguments and ideas within, you will find worthwhile connections to your own.

¹² I note a more accepting tone from Tierney (1995, p.384).

Chapter 1. – Framing my inquiry

‘...the primary purpose of human inquiry is practical: our inquiry is our action in the service of human flourishing.’ (Heron & Reason, 1997, p.288)

These words provide a neat, and circular, **connection between my inquiry’s topic, purpose, and hoped for outcomes: flourishing, flourishing, and flourishing**. Here, across the following four sections, I’ve looked to frame my inquiry along those lines. Opening up the background to the topic, showing how it originates in and connects to the work I do, revealing some of the positions I hold that influence it, and presenting the questions that I’ve explored.

1.1. – Opening: *A Tale of Two Sisters*

‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...’

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

In the course of inquiring into work and human flourishing I’ve discussed its various aspects and my ideas about it with many people. Often friends or colleagues have asked me directly about my research and I have tried to frame and explain what I’m concerned about. These conversations, and their questions and challenges, were instrumental in helping to define my inquiry and became a part of the research.

This tale – *A Tale of Two Sisters* – relates to two such conversations, held with two different women, two days apart, and in two distinct parts of Britain. One was while walking on a Cumbrian hillside, the other

sat in a Thai restaurant in London. The *sisters* in this tale – for anonymities sake I'll call them Kate and Louise - are not blood sisters, although as they once worked together I consider them as sisters in terms of their common history and their kindness and concern for one another. I relate their stories here, because, from these two conversations, their *differences* serve to illustrate the poles of the working-life experience posed in the introduction. Note, I have added Kate and Louise's additional comments to my account.

It was the best of times: Louise and I spoke during a dinner in London. She has worked, under a number of directors, in the same environmental think-tank for nearly twenty-five years. changing and developing her position to become a senior staff member in the administration. She has talked – for years now – about moving on from her workplace and I asked her about why she remains there despite this desire; what makes this a good place to stay? Initially she started to talk - in a third-person way – about motivation of people being the key to a good organisation and mentioned that appropriate recruitment was critical.

But when she started to talk about what has changed in her job and what keeps her there she began to relate it more to herself: *"after twenty-three years it is an even better place to work"*. I wanted to know what specifically makes it a good place to work and she pointed out a few things that help bind the organisation together; mentioning the *"sense of joint mission, the Monday [staff] meetings that we have had for years"* and the *"social stuff - quiz, Frisbee, rounders"*. For her though a fundamental change came when the organisation received a large grant. The donor put some conditions on its support, including that the group should develop a broader strategy.

Louise mentioned that for her the transformation came when she was given the responsibility to take over some of the related change work. It started with a branding process that, although initially focused on guidelines and style, ended-up catalysing what she described as a *"complete cultural change, as we began to really work towards and implement the brand itself."* She went on to say, *"it made us think [strategically] about what we put out, how that fits our mission, and the development of that."* Crucially, it was within her area of communications that this change effort was driven: *"Communications are at the top of the organisation... [so] it is a challenge to do things differently, think differently"*.

Louise also noted the importance of the example set by Mike, the leader of the organisation: *“He is very supportive, very human, leaves on time as he has kids, but is full-on doing his work. [He] gives the impression of being thoroughly excited and communicates this enthusiasm to everyone.”* Louise mentioned a recent example during a Monday meeting where Mike congratulated her and her team. It clearly gave her a real boost. Furthermore, she felt *“he really listens, takes note and has a nice balance, he doesn’t communicate stress onto us.”*

After reading my notes on our conversation Louise commented:

‘The main thought I had about this whole piece was that, while it does fit neatly with your ‘one-of-end-of-the-scale’ example, you only have my, inevitably edited, perspective and version to go on. I’m just one person in this organisation and plenty of people have passed through it and moved on easily to other things, developing their careers without so much attachment to it. ...I’m not sure we handle people well who don’t fit, which is the flip side of it being lovely for people who do - we’re a bit mono-cultural.

Having said that, I did an exit interview last week with someone who wasn’t paid highly and who worked her socks off, but left saying it was the nicest organisation she had worked, or could imagine working, for - and that is regularly the type of feedback we get, so I don’t think your tale is unreflective.’ (Louise, personal communication, June 16, 2014, my emphasis)

Now I switch to Kate, the other *sister*, to reveal a drastically different work experience:

It was the worst of times: Kate and Louise used to work together in the organisation that Louise still works in. Kate moved away in the mid-nineties to retrain and pursue a career in the National Health Service (NHS). Kate deals directly with patients in a technical function that evaluates their condition and helps to prescribe specific therapy for them. It’s a complex job, requiring both technical expertise and the ability to deal with patients of all backgrounds. Recently Kate has been suffering from breast cancer and through her enforced leave she has been questioning her career and how it fits with her aspirations.

We went for a walk at a local beauty spot and she started to tell me about her treatment and her job, and how she wasn’t looking forward to returning to it. It was quite a fresh day, being mid-Autumn, and I was a bit breathless, trying to walk and talk at the same time. Then she startled me by quite calmly saying: *“I’ve found it better to have cancer and chemotherapy than being at work.”* She looked at me from the corner of her eye and saw my surprise. Kate laughed a little, *“sounds awful doesn’t it?”* *“Well, yeah,”* I said, fumbling for the right thing to say *“...but how’s that?”*

Kate told me of her usual day and week in some detail. She said how they were expected, because of government targets, to make a certain number of patient evaluations a day. This target held no relation to the time they might need (some evaluations were routine while others were more complex), and, as she was personally conscientious, wishing to do the best for each patient, it meant that she was constantly having to adapt to the unrealistic schedule. Often at a cost to herself.

This situation meant that on top of the other administration that they have to do (following up internal communications and policy changes) and making visits to those patients that can't travel, she normally had limited breaks during the day (one break of fifteen minutes in a ten-hour day was not uncommon) and she often had to complete some of the administration at home. It resulted in her feeling worn-out and stressed a large part of the time - dreading the drive in - and it effectively squeezed any joy out of the work. These practices also led to absenteeism among certain members of the team, thereby further exacerbating the work load on the unit.

Kate later commented here as she was eager to make the working conditions clear:

'Basically, it is intense and draining and there is no let up and we have no control over our time, we don't even have any time allocated to catch-up with e-mails after holiday, you are just straight back into a full patient load; there are no scheduled mid-morning or mid-afternoon breaks; so intense that going to meetings or training or having cancer treatment felt like a holiday.' (Kate, personal communication, June 27, 2014)

My text continued:

Her situation was compounded by a supervisor who, seemingly under pressure from above, set the rigid working regime. Kate did understand that her boss had limited opportunities to give any leeway but noted that, when she did, it appeared to fall to favourites. This cliquish environment, institutional inflexibility, and a number of *"unfair"* decisions had left her feeling constrained and unhappy about the prospect of returning to work. Her sick leave had shown her that there was more that she wanted to achieve (she is a talented artist) and Kate now wants to make a change towards a new career, but is not sure what direction to take.

To me Louise's tale echoes much of the progressive motivation or leadership literature, where staff are given both space and a challenge, where they receive real-time feedback and support, and, as a result,

people react positively to it and are satisfied. What I find interesting about her story is that, even over a long-period, through life's ups-and-downs and as a single-parent, she could find satisfaction and personal grounding through her work. It also reflected how people change over time and, where they are allowed to bring their whole self to an organisation, how their different and developing needs can be accommodated. Perhaps revealing some positive – *enriching* – factors of work.

However, Kate's tale is, in my view, largely the opposite of Louise's. Recalling those news and research reports covered above, it identifies several negative – *diminishing* – factors. Here a talented and caring employee has become disenfranchised by the way her work is organised and disillusioned by an unsupportive management. It follows what Handy opines (quoting Peter Drucker) '*...why does 'so much of management [consist] of making it difficult for people to work'?*' (2015, p.123). Interestingly, Kate became engaged with my account and wanted to expand on it (Kate, personal communication, June 27, 2014):

'I could just feel myself getting old in the job, never felt that before. I felt that there has to be more to life than doing this five days a week, so much so that the year I had off to have cancer treatment was one of the best years of my life, because for the first time in years I wasn't rushing about like a mad thing being stressed. [Before] ...I was merely existing not really living, in a way I actually felt I was dying; now I think what if you were to work your arse off like that and never even make it to retirement, and never even have nine-months cancer treatment 'holiday', I'd be so mad, I'd want to go back and haunt the department and the powers that be that make people waste the best years of their life like this!'

She reflected further:

'If we didn't expect to live to retirement and treasured life and our health more, we might organise work quite differently; if cancer survivors ran the world I can guarantee you it would be organised quite differently'.

By telling this tale I hope to open up my topic, through instigating an initial consideration of our varied working experiences and showing how it is something worthy of our attention. You will meet Kate and Louise later on in this work and see their further reflections, but for now this *Tale of Two Sisters*, I believe, underlines **how work has the potential to either enrich or impoverish our lives - to flourish or to languish**. It also indicates a little of my approach and method of inquiry; the use of mine and others' voices and reflections on them.

1.2. – So why this inquiry?

So how did I come to be having such conversations with Kate and Louise in the first place? How did my inquiry focus onto an exploration of human flourishing as a personal and organisational workplace issue?

Maybe I was primed for this following some inimical experiences, but, rather straightforwardly, the focus of my inquiry came about when I started to **consider what really was important to me about my work**. My considerations followed three interconnected prompts rooted in current and past situations. A questioning of my work-life experiences, a process of making-sense of my rather particular career, and a recognition of my burgeoning desire to make a positive difference through what I do. In this section, as they inform the background and give framing to my inquiry, I present each's influence in turn.

1.2.1. – Originating in experience

Reflecting now, I see that as a young man I rather viewed work as a means to sustaining my life-style. I was studying or working to attain objectives, the milestones; it's what one did. Sure, I was attached to a certain type of work – the conservation, cerebral, international field I was in - but it was still a place to go and not a place to be.¹³ In my mid-twenties, I started to identify more closely with what my work said of me. I remember someone referring to me in a wedding speech as an “*environmentalist*.” It was interesting to see myself compartmentalised, and yet comfortable with that perceived status; a good guy, a bit alternative. And from being staff to becoming a manager, then perhaps a leader, I further identified with my role and with my craft – even once said of by someone as “*synonymous*” with the organisation I worked for. I felt good about what I was doing; although not understanding why.

But then I had a career *wobble*, brought on by a leadership change and where I became alienated from that *synonymous-organisation* by what I saw were increasingly vicious office politics and iniquitous working practices. This setting fundamentally altered my relationship with the organisation and challenged my contented, perhaps naïve, view of work. I also changed to survive it, and I began to

¹³ Some of this reflection is contained in Annex 2.1., *Vignette 17*.

question, with more discipline, what I was doing and why. I also became angrier (a *mien* you will see below) and more anxious about this, apparently common, organisational diminishing of people.

Identifying with the rage expressed by others:

'Take a look at our organizational lives, in which we routinely give up what is important to us, spending the overwhelming majority of our waking hours working in organizations that are more likely to inspire endless complaining and self-medication than truly fulfilling lives.' (Notter & Grant, 2012, p.2)

This marked the dissonance, noted in the introduction, that I felt between my hopes and my situation. Effectively, my various experiences prompted a process to understand what I thought was unsound organisational behaviour, and, importantly, to see what I could do about it. So, as they lie at the heart of my inquiry and serve as a way to introduce how they have influenced it, it is worth sharing something of my own *seasons of light and dark*.

Over the inquiry I have written perhaps twenty short pieces, what I call *vignettes*, on seemingly significant, recent or past, work-life moments. They were developed from a *free-fall writing* approach of rapidly writing down some key themes and impressions, which were then later brought together as personal reflections.¹⁴ Through them I looked to access how these work experiences have influenced my view of work and my practice (some were useful in building up the history of my career shown above).

These are personal reflections, tapping sometimes into rather raw emotions, and they may come across as perhaps one-sided. Indeed, as Etherington mentions, you may see things in them that I don't: *'...I can only tell what I know about my story at any given time. As the reader you might notice some of what may remain unknown to me about my stories through the language I use, ...'* (2004, p.23). Still, while intentionally chancing their *picaresque* potential, I offer these pieces, and my associated reflection, to help reveal the origins of the questions I have about work.

This first *vignette* relates to my recollection of an encouraging experience, one from mid-2008, recounting the positive feedback and feelings of achievement gained when finalising an NGO support project that I had directed. For me recalling this experience raises some positive and fulfilling aspects of work that makes it so compelling for me.

¹⁴ See Marshall (2016, p.101-106) for a useful description of such approaches. More on how they fit into the overall Research Approach is covered in Chapter 2.

Vignette 1 – Feedback (Reflection: written late-2015, recalling mid-2008)

The first NGO¹⁵ we met gave us almost ideal feedback. As they talked, they spoke of the process as we had envisioned it, of the issues they had identified through our methodology, and fully of the positive changes that had come about; even the realisation of a need to change their staff or board members. They wanted more. As me and my colleague Fernand drove south we chatted in the car on the outcomes. He said:

“You know we are onto something here, these are not just pleasantries to the donor, they really value it.”

I felt warm, sort of fuzzy. I was thinking *‘My God this really bloody worked, brilliant!’*¹⁶ But I had this tightness in my throat *‘but would it really continue, or would it just die without me pushing it, like so many of these projects?’* There was an impatience to get to our next meeting. The second group told us:

“This programme’s better than what’s been offered to us before, the rest is just child’s play compared to this.”

They revealed how our support had meant that they could get their own offices and hire people to do the work they had planned all along, and that now they were able to build for their future with defined organisational priorities. They pressed us to get support to let it continue over the long-term:

“It is very much needed; other donors don’t do this.”

I remember, in the drizzle outside, calling my wife – also a member of the project team – and sharing our excitement to their reactions. We three authors had this collective delight, a series of experiences that culminated in a sense of real achievement. There was a realisation, a kind of welling-up inside, that together we’d done something really exceptional. Others could see it, feel it, and they were ready to tell us. From my free-fall writing notes:

‘There is pride for sure, but more than pride, a sort of satisfaction, very deep and coming from the chest. Sort of a ‘swelling’ around the heart and middle. Sense of contentment. Big feeling

¹⁵ Non-Governmental Organisation.

¹⁶ Throughout my own words or thoughts are given in purple italics.

of satisfaction - of being right - and doing it well and actually getting the feedback from the most difficult of audiences. Fulfilling and sustaining! What a swan song to my career here! But my bloody ex-boss would never understand this, I pity her. It could all have gone to waste.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, May 5, 2013)

And I recall that evening, having a beer by the sea, when I voiced my concern to Fernand that whatever we did now the programme would wither once I left the organisation and the project ended. It made me sick, that on the cusp of something positive, that all the potential would go to waste. He told me:

"Look, then it's up to us. Forget them, we've done what we can here, let's use it ourselves and promote it ourselves. If they won't use it that's their problem, we can take it forward and develop it further."

And we have and even without us many years on, to our satisfaction, the programme continues today.

The afterglow of this work well done stays with me; it **speaks to my sense of purpose and meaning-making, and continuing development**. Indeed, I still use a large part of the methodology developed during this project (the organisational self-assessment tool that features in later chapters).

This next *vignette* presents a sliver of experience from a *season of Darkness*. Also, from 2008, it covers the ending of a demoralising working period for me as I left the organisation I had worked in for many years. It is necessary to relate it as, though conscious that my sentiments reveal heat and anger, this personally difficult period was important to the genesis of my topic; signalling something I needed to resolve.

Vignette 2 – The Final Staff Meeting (Reflection: written early-2016, recalling mid-2008)

Our director breezes in, late, the murmur of conversation lessens. It's a full-house, all the available staff are present. This is a big one, her e-mail ensured it. She goes to the front, with her entourage in tow. I'm sat off to one side of the auditorium, not in my usual place, leaning back in my chair. It's over for me, I already know, a secret for months, but I'm supposed to be here, expected to be here, needed by some to be here.

Her assistant checks the micro-phone and hands it to her. She looks uneasy, grey-green pallor to her complexion, and begins. She starts to explain the reorganisation – and the document that was sent out – and how all the programmes no longer exist, and how all heads of programmes and programme director positions no longer exist. Mine included. She goes on:

“This is the finalisation of the change process, the move to a full matrix structure that we’ve been planning.” And, as an afterthought, adds: *“....and has been approved by the Board.”*

She tries to sell the changes to the staff, saying that they mean more power to the project managers. But, from the looks of the staff and their body language I can see nobody is buying it. Where has this secret change come from, four-years later, if it was a part of the strategy all along?

I’m laughing inside, but it’s a sneer, there is no logic here, no plan, she can’t justify it, but then why would there be if it’s all about her? I’m thinking, *‘bloody hell, my position originated with that change process in the first place’*, and how clear it is now that the nonconformists - like me - have to go. I’m relieved, I was on my way out anyway, and my severance will be paid in full when I would have got nothing if I’d walked. This madness is over, but I don’t like this ending, it’s not really on my terms; my colours tattered, but intact.

Her monologue goes on: *‘Jesus! How many times have I had to listen to this burbling bullshit?’* She deflects raised hands. Margarita, one of my programme leaders, puts her hand down and turns to me, an imploring-look in her eye. I shrug. She turns back to the Director with her hands now tightly clasped in her lap. The audience becomes more restless as the message sinks in. She draws to a close. I look at my watch, *‘forty minutes, short for her.’* Then she starts to walk out, down the central aisle. There is a swell of noise from the staff:

“Hey we have questions!”

“I want to know something.”

“Where are you going?”

Even I am surprised; *‘really she didn’t expect to answer any questions? God this is bad form, even for her.’* I sit up now, it’s getting unpredictable. She stops half-way down the room – she’s forced to - and

starts to answer questions. It's another forty before she can escape. The answers are unsatisfying to the staff; it's all so arbitrary and poorly thought through. A cluster of my team surrounds me, I see groups around other managers, and there is disbelief, fear, sadness, and anger. They question me:

"Did you know?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"Three months."

"Why didn't you tell us?"

"Because I was obliged not to and, whether I like it or not, I am still one of the Senior Management."

"We should speak to the board."

"It won't help, they are behind it."

"What are you going to do? Will you re-apply for another position?"

"No, I am leaving, it's time to go."

We drift over to the main building; several join me in my office. I've worked alongside these people, as my people, for years; and for much of it under *her siege*, protecting and supporting them, I was exhausted. Yet I am out, I am safe now, but I still feel wretched and conflicted. I want to console them, to put my arms around them all and say we'll find a way out; like I have been doing all along, but that's not true anymore. And for me the way out is out. I give my prepared speech:

"She is doing a classic manoeuvre by getting rid of most of the senior and middle-manager positions in the pretence of giving more power to the project staff. But that power is diluted and ineffective, as actually the power becomes more centralised with her. It's textbook stuff; the message is: adapt or go."

Cyril and Jerphas, my other two programme heads, get it, they are starting to process their next steps, but Margarita is still in shock; she can't cope with yet another change. Maybe I should have warned them, but it would only have made the situation worse. In my defence, for some time, and before this 're-organisation' was declared, I'd softly been encouraging many of them to look for other opportunities, and even damaging my own prospects by trying to help them to leave. Now it was done, they would have to find their own way; as I would have to find mine.

It might not be evident that both these *vignettes* are parts of the same long, drawn-out, work saga, they describe events only a few weeks apart and there are other occasions where this setting appears in the thesis. Together they represent crucial experiences - central anecdotes - in my tale that have led me here. I wonder how they resonate with you?

I see from the first *vignette* that deep attraction I have to work that is fulfilling and meaningful. Yet, while it shows me flourishing, something I realised I value, it was a complex experience. There are both *dark* and *light* elements alluded to, those fractals of organisational life, with the project located in a wider personal and organisational *milieu*. But, by understanding that I would so like to repeat such experiences, it **pushed me to explore what makes such work experiences positive for me.**

Re-reading the second can still provoke indignation in me; recalling the shared despondency and the years of diminishment leading up to the moment portrayed. For an outsider it might be hard to understand my enervation, although I would be surprised if readers don't have similar experiences. I understand now how those efforts that I took to help my staff find new work and development opportunities outside this diminishing environment were **perhaps the awakenings of my search for enriching work and organisations.**

To underline these influences further, it is worth sharing a related exchange I had with a colleague (Laura Lewin a member of my Peer Inquiry Group¹⁷) who, during one of our conversations (L. Lewin, personal communication, April 12, 2014), asked me what had led me towards my topic. I explained:

"There is a throwback to this 'toxic boss' in particular. If you are in that situation with a narcissistic, sociopathic person, in a mission-led organisation, how do you deal with that? She [the director] tried to enrol me into her 'team', but she couldn't understand me either, that her

¹⁷ See Section 2.2.1.2.

capacity to be unfair and lie in your face was repellent to me. I couldn't deal with why this person was doing this..."

I related further an account of one of our first management meetings with this boss and how she provided a diagram of a completely centralised organisational system, saying: *"that's the pattern of decision-making I see"* (I cover leadership issues in Chapter 5.). Laura and I continued:

"You talk about her and this quite a lot. [Your wife] says it's [the inquiry] two years of catharsis. I am curious what you are getting out of still revisiting that?"

"I think because it is my sort of antithesis of what an organisation should be and what that generated. And ... it was oddly the making of me; perhaps perversely I did learn a lot in the five years, learning despite the suffering."

I concluded by saying:

"What bothers me deep down, it's not just the personal situation – though it's a big part of it – it's how everybody else was treated; a collective diminishing of people. That's just genuinely awful and unfair. Because of the work I do I have developed a sense of what I am about; you know social change or environmental protection, [and] that kind of fairness in civil society. It was perverse [to me] that such an organisation could be managed in such a way."

While those negative personal experiences were certainly a driver for my inquiry, I wanted to respond to them by **proffering a vision that shows how we might act otherwise**. Indeed, in noting how work can be a diminishing and nasty place, it is also potentially an activity, location, and experience where one might find purpose and flourish by doing so. Thus, from these reflections, I was developing a position (amending O'Toole) that:

'...workplaces become the arenas in which modern men and women devote most of their energies and in which they have the most influence. Today, the terms of our employment contracts tend to be greater determinants of our lifestyles than are provisions in the social contracts we have with our city, state, and national communities. From this perspective, [workplaces] have the greatest power to create conditions under which individuals can realize their potentials.' (2005, p.228)

Thus, my inquiry seemed to be a pathway to reclaim the life-enrichment that my work has offered me.

1.2.2. – The context of career and field

I've worked for around thirty years in a field that can loosely be characterised as *international*, *environmental*, and *civil society* related. Over time my role or function has varied from junior researcher

to director, as have the locations; from the UK, to Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Belgium, and now Switzerland. I began in nature conservation, moved to environmental activism, then into democracy-building work. In the last ten years I have increasingly been providing organisational development (OD) support for civil society organisations (CSOs¹⁸). Hence, my work with mission-led, civil society groups - either directly with NGOs themselves, or the government programmes or private foundations that support them - is the context and working *milieu* that has informed and is the place of my research.

Consequently, with CSOs being the locus of my research there are implications towards my thesis. Notably, that the **organisational characteristics of such groups somewhat delineates the scope of my inquiry and perhaps the eventual range of its application**. I feel that *Third-Sector* organisations have certain organisational specificities and a socio-political context that is distinctive to them.¹⁹ Each is worth expanding on here as they add a certain nuance to an understanding of my inquiry locations. Plus, these characteristics have potential implications for providing an environment for workplace flourishing (although those I work with are of varying scales, from large IOs to small NGOs, and I have concentrated on the experience of work *per se*).

Typically, many of them are organisationally ‘...small, under-resourced and under-skilled’ (Jackson & Donovan, 1999, p.viii). This is not to say that they have no resources or no skills, just that these concerns seem ever present in the field. Plus, subsequently, by being small or medium-sized, organisational and human development, where present, tends to be *ad hoc*. With the financial resources to invest in their work or development, and access to all the required skills they need to support their often highly complex work usually coming at a premium.

Certainly, many of the OD trends sweeping the corporate world pass them by and they are often too busy surviving to develop consciously. I find common cause with Roper and Pettit’s characterisation that:

‘...NGOs tend to get stuck in single-loop²⁰ learning because their planning and evaluation tools focus on the operational level, and they thus fail to engage people in critical reflection on underlying issues of behaviour, values, and agency.’ (2002, p.263)

¹⁸ Although understanding their differences, I use this interchangeably with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

¹⁹ Useful summary in Baccaro, 2001, p.6-18 & p.30.

²⁰ See glossary.

Thus, while their leaders are often highly-motivated and highly-educated individuals, with a keen awareness of their topic area, many are not natural managers of projects or people and even less so of organisations.

These conditions can produce organisational stresses; like the short-termism or limited organisational learning that are representative of the movement. For example, in one study, NGOs have been censured for: not putting values into practice, having unsupportive leadership, exhibiting organisational cultures that are based on hierarchical power or gender-insensitivity, following short-term strategies, using weak financial or HR systems, and having low staff competences (James & Hailey, 2007, p.83). Of those organisations involved in my cases all exhibited one or more of these stresses.

Primarily my case groups are mission rather than profit-driven and so by being values-led²¹ they focus on positive changes for society; with success measured there. And where they are political they are non-partisan; or they are meant to be. Yet the social-political context that they operate in governs much of how they function, both in terms of external operating conditions and how the inner *life-worlds* of those working in them are influenced by interacting within it.²²

Indeed, by usually acting in roles contra to powerful institutions (business or government) or powerful norms (cultures, standards, customs), it can lead to a conflictual or outsider mindset where relationships are problematised. You will see below where this became very evident in the JUPITER case (Section 3.2.). Furthermore, linked to the resource pressures mentioned above and a reliance on external donors (an elite in themselves and with their own aims (Howard, 2003, p.152)), such rivalry may impact on co-operation values:

‘Competition for resources and recognition do not foster the level of collaboration needed if our main aim is to put ourselves at the service of the common good. CSOs have become increasingly protective of their brands and isolate themselves against the outside world.’ (Narberhaus & Sheppard, 2015, p.69)

Thus, despite being mission-led, enshrined in various legal or governance forms, there can be a drift from those organisational values espoused and stakeholder needs. Leading to a potential loss of relevance (Filcak & Atkinson, 2006, p.17) and solidarity, where: *‘...they will pay ... by having*

²¹ This could be a thesis in itself, but the values I would prescribe to the sector include respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights; leading to a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between genders prevails.

²² Referring to the ideas of Jurgen Habermas on *‘...the theory of system and lifeworld...’* (Kemmis, 2006, p.94).

organizational goals detached from the orientations and attitudes of their members and dependent instead upon imperatives of maintaining and expanding organizational power (Kemmis, 2006, p.97).

Consequently, where organisations scramble for influence, defend their niche, or look to survive, organisational values or culture issues are often not seen to be part of the core job or of benefit to their work (voiced by one manager in the URANUS case below). Coming from those that have banded together to become more effective for their cause this contradictory attitude represents an obstacle for human flourishing in these workplaces. Indeed, it has been commented by others that many ‘...CSOs are not really concerned about looking after their workforce’ (James & Hailey, 2007, p.83). I return to further implications for the CSO community in Sub-section 6.2.1.

Hence, I am conscious that the organisations I’ve inquired through have certain characteristics that can be seen to be sector specific. Moreover, there were limits to the OD work I could do with them; usually constrained to shorter-term interventions (I return to this context in later chapters). Besides these provisos, **the particularities of my career in the civil society field certainly colours my assumptions, ideals, and reactions** (Etherington, 2004, p.19). Thus, it is necessary to be open to how this background ontology has influenced my thesis.

While I wouldn’t unreservedly place a *holy crown* on the heads of civil society organisations. Indeed, many are poorly run, unaccountable or ineffective, and the relations between them do not necessarily represent a happy communion. Still, overall, I believe there is a tangible aspiration here for social betterment. Thus, after thirty years, the values inherent in the sector pervade my views and beliefs. An axis of fairness, equality and solidarity permeates my worldview, it is something I hope to live up to and, importantly, rather envisage of workplaces in my field. For example, the field’s values-base means to me that CSOs should exemplify them through the way they operate (partly covered in *Vignette 15*, Annex 2.1.), underpinning my manifesto of organising principles and expectations set out in later chapters (5., and 6.3).

But my worldview is something that has developed over time. Initially, when working in the early nineties in the nascent democracies of Eastern Europe, I had a rather hazy notion of civil society.²³ However, and hopefully without sounding overly pious, I came to realise that the **striving for better**,

²³ A time that Ernest Gellner captured in his book *Conditions of Liberty* where: ‘A new ideal was born, or reborn, in recent decades: Civil Society. ... The condition defined by this term had become highly valued and loaded with political appeal. In extensive parts of the World, what it denoted was absent. ...an aching void’ (1996, p.1).

fairer societies²⁴, pursued through the actions of the organisations I work with, is at the core of my work's meaning. I've since reflected on the time when I first recognised this:

'My revelation of what I was really about came when I was asked, in 1998, to run a workshop on the role of NGOs in civil society for a group of young environmentalists. As I prepared I soon realised that I had to start with society first and how we organise it before touching on the role of NGOs. In the first session, and with subsequent ones, I recall almost entreating the participants to fulfil this role and to act. Often I felt so emotional about what we were discussing that I my voice was breaking.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, July 5, 2013)²⁵

Moreover, as I started in conservation work, which led to an awareness of environmental sustainability issues, a further veneer is laid onto my position. Basically, I don't consider that any society, even an industrial one, can seriously be *divorced* from the natural world; it is the space that we inhabit. In the course of my career I have come to believe that the way we abuse the environment is ultimately an indicator of how we are negatively treating one another (with most interactions through work or economic activity). Indeed, as *The Natural Step* proponent David Cook writes, the depletion of natural systems has '*still failed to create a world in which everyone has the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life*' (2004, p.21, my emphasis). This underscores my view that, in terms of human fulfilment, all organisations – and not just civil society ones - have a vital responsibility for fairer and sustainable societies. As Cook relates:

'...organisations need to think much more carefully about the consequences of what they do, and how they do it. They need a systems approach that analyses the impact of their behaviour on the capacity of others to lead a fulfilling life.' (2004, p.60)

Deliberating this further awakened in me a debate on the underlying purposes of organisations and how they should be, act, and function. I now consider that if **organisations are the main place of interaction for the individual in society, then they must have a role towards ensuring fair societies** that do not diminish others.²⁶ This is not a new idea; see the history of trade union movements across the globe (indeed, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has for several years conducted the *Decent Work Programme*²⁷, a worthy initiative to secure acceptable conditions for employees²⁸). But, perhaps

²⁴ Supporting Narberhaus's view that: '*CSOs have a track record of success in making a positive difference for a better society*' (2011, p.7).

²⁵ These notes come from my musing diary, a research method explained in Section 2.2.2.

²⁶ A convenient place to start being the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its articles on work (UNO, n.d.).

²⁷ See: Baccaro, 2001; Campbell, 2012; Lee & McCann, 2011; Philip, 2013; and Zarka-Martres & Guichard-Kelly, 2005.

²⁸ Defined as: '*...productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate income, with adequate social protection. It also means sufficient work, in the sense that all should have full access to income-earning opportunities*' (Baccaro, 2001, p.1).

radically, I'd begun to believe that a **fundamental aim of organisations should be to actively promote well-being; my enriching organisation** (EO). How to do so in the civil society organisations I work with, thus formed a core inquiry focus.

1.2.3. – Leading from and to practice

As I look to develop myself professionally and to enhance my abilities for helping others, my working practice as a civil society/OD consultant is a significant background to and focus of this inquiry. It has meant that my striving for improved professional aptitude and impact is both a starting point and a desired destination for my inquiry. Indeed, since I work almost exclusively in a supporting role - working vicariously as a consultant, intermediary or as a re-granter - **my sense of competence correlates strongly with my own ability to effect positive change**. Cheung-Judge and Holbeche, connecting my thesis with OD theory, speak of this as a *'quest for mastery'* (2011, p.25).

Allied to that, to do well at what I value provides a clear connection to the work that defines me and to my meaning-making mentioned above. Again, in step with Roper and Pettit and connected to the previous sub-section:

'...given the values that underlie our work, we should also be committed to building organisations that are '[s]ufficiently democratic that those ideas with merit can be enunciated with power from all levels of the organisation and evolve into practice', and that 'possess [...] teams capable of functioning democratically and effectively'.' (2002, p.269)

Certainly, I saw that several of my *vignettes* highlighted how my desire to make a positive difference through what I do has deepened over time (aspects of this in *Vignettes 14-17*, Annex 2.1.). This continuing process of further professional development is an important pillar of my inquiry - much of the point really - and within it connects personal and organisational change practices.

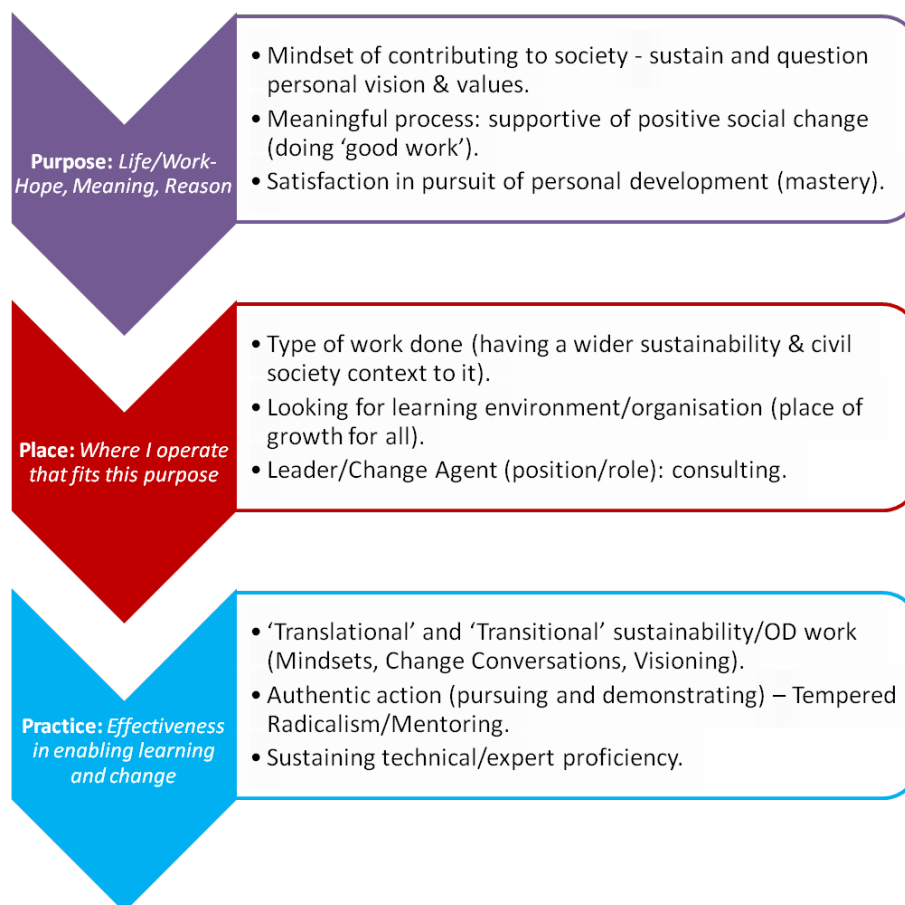
Actually, early on in my inquiry's development I had looked to challenge myself with some of those *qualities required* of a consultant in my field to reveal where my practice questions lay (I referred to INTRAC's²⁹ core ingredients of OD consulting, see James, 1998). Eventually, though, I revisited a recurring set of themes raised during my Masters studies (2009-2011), which appeared to define core issues for my professional development:

²⁹ International NGO Training and Research Centre.

- 1) My focus on vision and values for people and organisations,
- 2) To find a place to stand - my institutional space, and
- 3) By looking for leverage - exerting the 'right' influence.

These three points evolved into an emerging personal-professional position, where my work meaning (*Purpose*), a location or context to act (*Place*), and an expression of my abilities (*Practice*) - or *PPP* - were further refined by a clustering of different aspects under each of them. Indeed, without going into detail on each individual part, I felt that **together these different facets provided a sort of a *motif* of my work-life**. In considering my work practice and career motivations **they appeared to contain how I view, understand, and value what is significant to me professionally**.

Figure 1.1: An emerging personal-professional position/approach (adapted from Atkinson, 2011):



In the terms of my developing inquiry, I began to wonder whether it was *within* these facets, if well composed, that *my flourishing through work lies* and thus by investigating them I potentially had a

way to reveal those factors I required for it. Originally though, I was uncertain how to consider them further and to get beyond the propositionally-listed levels shown in *Figure 1.1*.

Consequently, although research approach is discussed in the next chapter, I feel it is necessary to expand here on the further development of my ideas behind these *PPP* facets. Accordingly, before settling on *PPP* as an inquiry *device*, I decided to inquire into them from a more impressionistic position (a description of this research method is given in Section 2.2.2.) and to represent them – and I supposed potentially my workplace flourishing - through an image. The resulting picture (*Figure 1.2*.) was painted at the beginning of my inquiry as I strove to define its direction. Inspired by toying with the classic Venn diagram and then a Möbius strip, it expresses all three *PPP* facets as linked and flowing into one another freely.³⁰

Figure 1.2: PPP Möbius (Created May 2013)



I painted without much of a plan and I originally only made the main loops, but it seemed too static and clean. So, I put more into the merging of them and then added the swirls, jetting-off like solar-flares, to

³⁰ A recurring pattern in many cultures.

imply dynamism and potential, interaction and intent. It is difficult to express this in writing, but I can visualise this image three-dimensionally, presenting a circularity and continuity that I found appealing.

To me the image shows balance, yet has flow, and the parts are joined, yet have distinctiveness. They are constantly in flux and intermingling with one another, having the potential to leap-off; a pulsating, almost living, form. From this I appreciated how for me these *PPP* aspects somehow interact with, are formed by, and inform one another. The colours, a result of this experiment, are used throughout the thesis; purple – mysterious, deep, rich – represents *Purpose*; the red – a fire red – is *Place* (I added the yellow later) - with warmth and passion and cause; and the light blue – clear, proficient, pure – for *Practice*.

From this artful-investigation my understanding of the *PPP* motif moved from being a sort-of hierarchy (those levels presented in *Figure 1.1.*) to a contained whole; although still with individual definition.³¹ As such, **I felt the image suggested that all were required to be present - in the *right formula* - for my workplace flourishing to become apparent.** What that formula might entail - the what, the how – thus became conscious inquiry points.

It was an exciting insight and moved my position forward so that I could more comfortably **assume the *PPP* motif as an inquiry device and potential outcome** (how it fits into my research methodology is shown in Sub-section 2.1.3.). So, in order to try to reveal both the principles and practicalities of workplace flourishing, throughout the inquiry I have explored a range of personal and organisational questions through them; strengthening them in the process. And, while I am conscious that others define their own factors to *cut the flourishing cake* (more in Section 3.1.), I contend that these have genuinely evolved from my own work practice and career motivations. Indeed, I suspected that these facets might potentially be useful as points to inquire with others on their own flourishing.

Furthermore, it was via this *PPP* motif that I devised my initial scope for an enriching organisation (see *Figure 1.4.*) and my main inquiry questions. Hence, you will find reference to them occurring throughout this thesis: during my client case studies, within the peer conversations, and eventually as the basis to reconsider and revise my professional practice. The final implications are couched in their terms. They are the *red thread* that helps to order the inquiry, by facilitating the *plotline*, providing the *filter* by which I inquire, and ultimately becoming an outcome of my research.

³¹ Further images of each aspect are explored in Section 6.1.

1.3. – Inquiring positions

One of the challenges in presenting my inquiry has been a realisation that some of the positions I now hold, and use to explain it, were deepened during the research process. In particular some of the clarifying assumptions that needed to be aired were further elaborated as I went. As Rousseau wrote: *‘All my ideas are connected ...[but] I could not expound them all at once’* (1998, p.x). Indeed, I felt the quandary of whether to present certain parts as either context or as findings. There were no easy answers, but those ideas in this section are perhaps best placed as framing as they introduce two important territories of theory.

The first sub-section highlights my opinion on the centrality of work to our lives, an eventual underpinning to how work contributes to the overall subjective development of our lives. This view builds from my own career experiences by introducing literature focussing on the philosophy of work. As a reader, your reaction to my assertion here will determine whether you are open to entertain the argument that follows. The second covers those implications of the constructivist underpinnings to my thesis’s approach and its ultimate claims.

1.3.1. – Work as a locus of meaning, formation, and flourishing

In their writing Christophe Dejours and Jean-Phillipe Deranty³² concede that the **centrality of work** is perhaps seen as an *‘...unfashionable thesis...’* (2010, p.167). However, I persist with it as a key assumption of mine and a link to the field of work and labour relations. That **work and workplaces are significant to our overall flourishing and well-being**. Connected with the previous sections, my belief comes from my and others’ experiences. With work a critical part in our *life’s play*, we keenly feel the negative or positive implications of each scene’s script. The recurring examples, given throughout this paper, where work has contributed to a sense of satisfaction or connection, I believe consigns a position that work isn’t meaningful at some level as untenable. Thus, I generally concur with Gini’s proposal that:

³² The work of Dejours, Professor of the Chair of Psychoanalysis, Health and Work at France’s *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers* (National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts), was introduced to me by a Swiss colleague.

'We need work, and as adults we find identity and are identified by the work we do. [And] If this is true then we must be very careful about what we choose to do for a living, for what we do is what we'll become.' (Gini, 1998, p.712)

Kate's later reflection, the *Dark* from *The Tale of Two Sisters*, is, I feel, further illuminating of my position:

'...I think if I had to identify one crucial thing I learned from my experiences [of work] over [the] past few years it is related to this, our work environment to some extent shapes who we are, the more we are there, the more this is the case. So it can prevent us from figuring out who we really are. And maybe turn us into something we don't want to be.' (Kate, personal communication, February 11, 2016).

On a philosophical level Deranty has explored the work theories of the psychologist Dejours, revealing that his: *'...thesis of the centrality of work holds that the activity of work ... is central for individuals in three related senses'* (2015, p.105). Those three senses, to which I would largely subscribe, can be summarized thus:

- *Psychologically* – *'...work constitutes an indispensable factor in the constitution of individual identity and in the development of an individual's capacities'* (2015, p.105). Deranty labels this the *'pragmatic' dimension* – with a clear resonance to **work practice and meaning**.
- *Socially-Politically* – *'The individual experiences and forms of interpersonal relations shaped by the organization of work have a deep impact on social relations outside the work sphere...'* (2015, p.105). Highlighting the importance of interaction with others, as we act in the world; and **connections to place and relatedness**.
- *Gender Relations* – *'...men's general domination of women, which traverses human history, is centrally structured around the organization of work [in all senses]'* (2015, p.105). Giving an indication towards **power and values issues** that I touch on later.

Interestingly, in an earlier paper, together they defined a fourth way that work is central to us and that is *'epistemically'* (Dejours & Deranty, 2010, p.167). Where they consider that work is also an interface where subjective and objective **knowledge is tested or created**.

Importantly they highlight that each of these ways are separate but related to one another³³, and their final thesis is worth mentioning here as it:

‘...puts the emphasis on the role that work plays in the formation of human relationships, and beyond this, in the construction of subjectivity and in the evolution of society. ...the preeminent experience through which subjective life can develop and be enhanced.’ (Dejours & Deranty, 2010, p.167, my emphasis)

Their position, I believe, is informative of the importance of work. It fits with my own tendencies towards **work’s role in constructing ourselves, our society, and our understanding**, and resonates with Gini’s use of Gregory Baum’s magnificently put phrase, that *“Labor is the axis of human self-making”* (1998, p.708). The *pragmatic dimension*, the first of their four-ways, seems particularly pertinent to the promotion of flourishing in the workplace and is worth considering further:

‘When the experience of work is conducive, it is in fact an indispensable factor of development, that is, one that cannot be replaced by other kinds of activity to guide and foster individual development. Conversely, when work does not provide these potentialities for development and identity formation, it becomes a major factor of disruption because of its psychological significance. It leads to the formation of pathological complexes, in the cognitive, emotional and moral life of the subject.’ (Deranty, 2015, p.105)

I note some research around subjective well-being seems to support this position, explaining that there are higher levels of well-being – or happiness³⁴ - for those employed than those unemployed (Dolan, 2014, p.64; Haybron, 2013, p.71; Helliwell, 2014, p623-625; Huppert, 2014, p.18). Obvious one might say, but as Felicia Huppert notes:

‘...there is evidence that the loss of wellbeing [from becoming unemployed] far exceeds that expected from the reduction in the income from employment.’ (2014, p.18)³⁵

On a personal level, as someone who has on occasion followed my spouse’s career, I have felt a sense of unease and lack of rootedness when having to find a new job in a new place. And I would agree that:

‘...working involves not only producing, it also involves one’s own transformation. To work is to work upon oneself. The scourge of unemployment is precisely that it deprives the subject of the right to contribute (to the life of a work collective, to a company, to society)...’ (Dejours & Deranty, 2010, p.172)

³³ They describe these further as: ‘four fundamental, overlapping yet separate, ways in which work can be said to be central to the formation of subjectivity’ (2010, p.169).

³⁴ More on the connections between happiness, well-being, and flourishing is given in Section 3.1.

³⁵ Mental health impacts are covered in Frymorgen, 2017; & University College London, 2017a & b.

This returns to the *inclination* of my inquiry, that during our working lives, in work organisations, we should **derive those opportunities for personal development and identity formation**. Gini also makes this linkage:

'Given the centrality of work in adult life and its impact on the development of personality and character, ... [it is] my contention that the ethos of workplace, corporate culture and the mores of management influence the ethical norms and moral values of individual workers both on and off the job.' (1998, p.712)

Indeed, well-being researchers have noted '*...a relationship between subjective wellbeing and quality of work...*', and point to various aspects that contribute to that: '*...e.g., workplace trust, having a job that requires skills, offers variety, and can be completed satisfactorily*' (Huppert, 2014, p.18). Thus, I view work as the '*...metronome for human development and growth*' (Gini, 1998, p.713), where the rhythm set impacts on our '*working identity*' (Ibarra, 2002, p.42). Crucially then, in the terms of my inquiry and organisational practice, I felt a need to reveal **how work can contribute to or undermine the goal of human flourishing**; those *enriching* or *diminishing* factors that I began to note above. For the civil society field, the challenge to its constituent organisations is do they truly enact their espoused values through the way they treat their people?

1.3.2. – Constructivism and Inquiry

This framing requires me to reveal my assumptions about how the knowledge I claim herein was learnt, or created, and thus what kind of knowledge that is. In other words, *how I came to believe, what I believe I know*. This is an arbiter for anyone reading my words, whether the lessons I draw are supported by the process of knowledge creation that led to them; I suppose it's a question for anyone carrying out research. So, here I **elaborate on my constructivist position, how it connects within a post-modern view of knowledge creation**³⁶ and **informs my thoughts on organisational change and inquiry**. You'll perhaps be noting my bent towards defining, categorising and analysis too, an *expert-mode*, which I recognised later as a theme across my work.

³⁶ Essentially a having a '*skeptical attitude towards certainty, and a relative view of belief and knowledge*. Postmodernists see truth as much more fluid than classical (or modernist) epistemologists' (Pardi, 2011).

Constructivism, with its roots in the ideas of Jean Piaget and the constructivist theory of knowing³⁷, holds several important differences from that held within the positivistic-modernist science view. Margaret Boden gives a straight and, I think, equitable critique of the arguments between what she calls ‘...the naturalist/constructivist (or realist/idealist) divide ... in Western Philosophy’ (2010, p.84) that helps to highlight these differences. Indeed, in the school of research that my inquiry lies, the social sciences, there is regularly on show a polarized set of views regarding researchers’ positions, split by a surfeit of elaborate names. So, by ascribing to constructivism, and its distinctions, that defines a certain approach to my research and work practice.

Fundamentally, for me, constructivism elucidates how **our view of reality, our meaning-making, is subjectively assembled from our experiences, interactions and environment**; ‘...that we are constantly changing and developing our identities and that they are never fixed’ (Etherington, 2004, p.15). This stance, on how we subjectively perceive and understand our world, allows me to understand and accept how my personal experiences and interactions subjectively influence my perceptions, assumptions, and deductions; and *vice versa*.

I thereby subscribe to a *cognitive constructivism* stance, which I believe positions constructivism appropriately and practically as: “‘...a theory of knowing, not of being”. In other words, it is ... epistemology, not [of] *metaphysics*’ as found in *ontic- or radical-constructivism*.’ (Boden, 2010, p.84, my emphasis). Helping to identify the **primary role of experience and our relations with others in creating knowledge** and resulting in models of knowing that are: ‘...more actor based, experientially oriented, praxis oriented, and self-reflective than the traditional positivistic, objectivistic model’ (Barrett, Fann-Thomas & Hocevar, 1995, p.356). Thus, **the capturing of experience, and relating the co-creation of ideas and understanding (conditional knowledge), informs the research and validity approaches I follow**. Also presenting a need for a variety of epistemological methods that rely heavily on reflexivity within their application (I return to these points when setting out my research approach and questions of validity in Chapter 2.).

Further implications of this constructivist stance connect both my research and my work practice with organisations; highlighting something of the change processes therein. Indeed, Reason and Torbert bring together a nexus of my beliefs about organisational life when they assert that: ‘The “reality” of

³⁷ Constructivism, **a theory of all learning**, as opposed to Constructionism, Seymour Papert’s theory of pedagogy (Noss & Clayson, 2015, p.285).

groups, organizations and wider society is a social construction which is primarily established and maintained by conversation (Ford and Ford, 1995)' (2001, p.10, my emphasis). Taking that construction-conversation observation further, Barrett *et al.*, give a thorough overview of a constructivist outlook within an organisational change process. They note how:

'...we decenter the individual and instead begin to view "relating" as the place where meaning is made. In other words, instead of seeing meaning centered in the individuals' head, we should view meaning as occurring in our relatedness with one another.' (1995, p.353, my emphasis)

As an aside, in the past, as a novice manager, I was often bemused or frustrated over a co-worker's seeming intransigence towards, what I saw was, my logical, rational, and reasoned arguments. Missing from my understanding then was the constructive role of the communication between us and the need to engage better with another's position. Bohm highlights my struggle, concluding suitably:

'...it is easy for each one of us to see that other people are "blocked" about certain questions, ...But if each one of us can give full attention to what is actually "blocking" communication while he is also attending properly to the content of what is communicated, then we may be able to create something new between us...' (2004, p.5)

Ralph Stacey in *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations* (2001), and with others (Shaw, 2002; Stacey & Griffin, 2005 & 2006), I believe adopts a constructivist view towards organisational change. What he describes equates with my understanding of the *milieu* that both my work and this research is immersed in:

'...a perspective according to which organizations are understood to be ongoing, iterated processes of cooperative and competitive relating between people... called ... complex responsive processes of relating.' (Stacey & Griffin, 2006, p.1)

Indeed, my practice and research approach, being both active within and appreciative of this perspective, leans on an assumption of **the constructivist role of conversations towards perception-building and organisational change**. As Lips-Wiersma and Morris say: *'As we talk we construct the world we live in, and how we talk changes that'* (2011, p.70). Certainly, this idea of meaning being *made* through our relatedness has clear connections to the organisational development approaches that I use and the working experiences I explore with my peers in later chapters. As a practitioner-researcher this was an important realisation for me, as even if one might not be able to predict outcomes:

'The significance of this theory for [OD] practitioners is its belief that if reality is socially constructed, then it can be modified by injecting alternative conversations, stories and narratives into the system'. (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011, p.38)

And thus:

'Language offers the opportunity for change by enabling new action alternatives, while reflecting the constraints of previous patterns, actions, and assumptions.' (Barrett et. al., 1995, p.358)

All this points to the shift required by the researcher/practitioner in a constructivist paradigm, **from being in the position of the neutral observer in an inquiry to that of an agent in it**. In other words: *'Accepting the constructive role of observation and giving up the notion of duality between observation and the observed'* (Kordeš, 2016, p.380-381). Furthermore, how potentially the experience of our research might be affecting us. As Kordeš highlights, by *'Acknowledging the possibility of a personal transformation of the researcher'* (p.381). I have keenly sensed this during my inquiry; both questioning and recognising whether I was flourishing through my research and my practice. Indeed, the exploratory focus of my inquiry puts this to the fore, and I point to those occasions throughout. It is perhaps most evident in my various work cases, where I look to capture my reaction in work terms and reflect against my inquiry questions.

Indeed, the writing of Patricia Shaw (*Change Conversations*, 2002) has been a crucial influence towards how I consider change happens and thereby to my thesis's stance. Thus, I support her erudite observation that links constructivism, conversation, and change:

'I want to suggest a change in the way we often think of the part conversation plays in organizational life. We currently take it for granted as a background to more important activities through which we design and manage our organizations, as though conversation is carrying or transmitting the thing we should be focussing our attention on. Instead ... [I] ... work with the assumption that the activity of conversation itself is the key process through which forms of organizing are dynamically sustained and changed.' (Shaw, 2002, p.10, my emphasis)

Hence, I underline conversation, and its role in constructing perception and understanding, to the front-and-centre of my inquiry, both for generating data and in developing positions. Indeed, the development of my client cases follows a similar narrative approach to hers and interaction with others is an element in my research; both formal, through peers and case studies, and informal, such as with Kate and Louise. Furthermore, this relatedness, which appears to be a crucial facet for our flourishing (covered in Chapter 4.), nicely connects my research approach with the inquiry topic itself:

'Assuming that organizations are centers of human relatedness, positive change is fueled as people relate together in new and meaningful ways in the workplace, through the elevation of inquiry into that which is good, there is a fusion of strengths and a subsequent activation of positive energy. Positive change is triggered by increases of inquiry into the appreciable world and the expansion of relatedness to others.' (Sekerka & Fredrickson, 2013, p.87)

Furthermore, a constructivist world-view is not a naïve position. As it accepts that **human-relations are not a level playing field by recognising those discrepancies inherent in power relations**: *'Power is this enabling-constraining relationship where the power balance is tilted in favour of some and against others depending on the relative need they have for each other'* (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p.5). It connects with, poet and feminist, Adrienne Rich's rather poignant description:

'When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality, choose not to see you or hear you, ..., there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.' (1986, p.199)

I have felt this keenly across my working experiences (note *Vignette 2* above) and placed an added responsibility on me as a practitioner; to recognise its' influence appropriately where I saw it happening. You will notice where instances of this arose in my inquiry as I engaged in my work practice with various organisational leaders. Indeed, leadership appeared as a key parameter for enriching organisations (explored in Section 5.3.).

Still, whilst refuting blanket claims of objectivity in social science³⁸, perhaps controversially, I am also accepting of much of the *common-sense* found in naturalist scientific explanation. Agreeing with Etherington that they provide *'...statistical incidence of phenomena that would not be possible to gain through using reflexive and narrative small-scale research'* and *'...raise our awareness... and serve as a background context against which researchers can explore... experiences in detail and depth'* (2004, p.26). Indeed, herein there are places where I delve heavily into literature and theory as an addition to the overall inquiry-mix; the Tolstoian-*mélange* I noted in the introduction.

I found the adoption of, what I'd call, this *pragmatic*³⁹-*constructivist* view methodologically liberating. Although regrettably this may perplex purists of post-conventional research, who might conclude that, by also drawing from so-called expert sources that claim objectivity, my inquiry is tainted and creates a tension towards the subjectivity I espouse. Or could infer that I then lean towards proposing *universal knowledge*. So, I feel it important to clarify how my pragmatic hybrid-approach sits within constructivism. I have two main lines of argument.

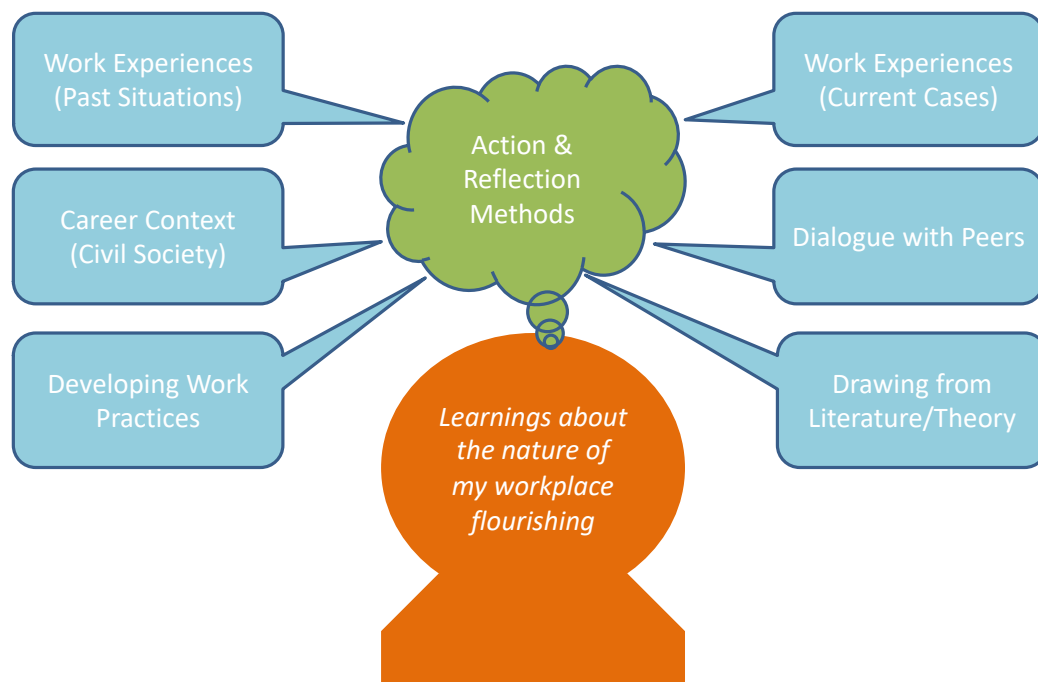
³⁸ By noting that: *'standards of agreement change though times, places and cultures'* (Van Bendegem, 2015, p.139), and Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan's (2010) *exposé* of the sample bias in much behavioural science.

³⁹ Being careful not to align myself formally with Pragmatism or Neo-pragmatism (Sundin & Johannisson, 2005) as that is a discussion too far for this thesis.

First, by refuting claims to objectivity surely then any piece of research is subjective. For **if something is not objective then conversely it must be subjective**. Thus, even if they weren't meant to be, my varied sources are hypothetically in line with constructivism. In practice of course, it meant that I have had to reflect on the origins, positioning, and veracity of those sources.

The second argument follows that despite the origins of the sources or inputs I have utilised, the nature of my consideration of them (filtered via my own - and those I inquire with - background, experience and assumptions) would necessitate that **the outcomes of my deliberations are subjective and constructed accordingly**. Let me follow that statement with a diagram (*Figure 1.3.*) to illustrate how I believe the varied research inputs from my inquiry (including literature and theory, some of which might originate from a positivistic expert knowledge tradition) are all - for want of a better phrase - *subjectively processed* in my inquiry and thereby help derive the constructed knowledge I lay claim to. Indeed, I'm sceptical whether anyone could effectively screen-out all the background influence of their accreted knowledge.

Figure 1.3: Inputs to constructed knowledge



To be sure each source influences me in different ways and, at different times, I may prefer one *data-source* over another. What I can say (and there is more on this *Apollonian-Dionysian* combination in Chapter 2.) is that my research approach developed alongside the inquiry itself – constructed, I might remark – and **I endeavoured to be open and reflexive throughout; noting where each source gives input**. As my research approach developed, my trust and reliance on different forms of knowing - an extended epistemology – grew. Indeed, despite the epistemic doubts I refer to in the next chapter, I recognise now how the outcomes I present in this thesis would not have come about by relying solely on conventional sources.

However, I concede that the nature of the knowledge created through my inquiry - those claims made within it - are also confined by my inquiry's subjective parameters (myself, my peers, my organisations, my field). Indeed, **the strength of any claims surely weaken the further from those research locales one goes** (I address validity in Section 2.3.). It does not mean that those readers *further away* cannot find some relevance or resonance in my findings (indeed I suspect for many much of it might), but it is necessary to underline this contingency.

1.4. – Inquiry purposes: focus, questions and aims

The preceding sections describe the background that *set up* my thesis; its broad origins, approaches and assumptions. Here I relate how they translated into an elaboration of my inquiry's purposes and thesis's direction.

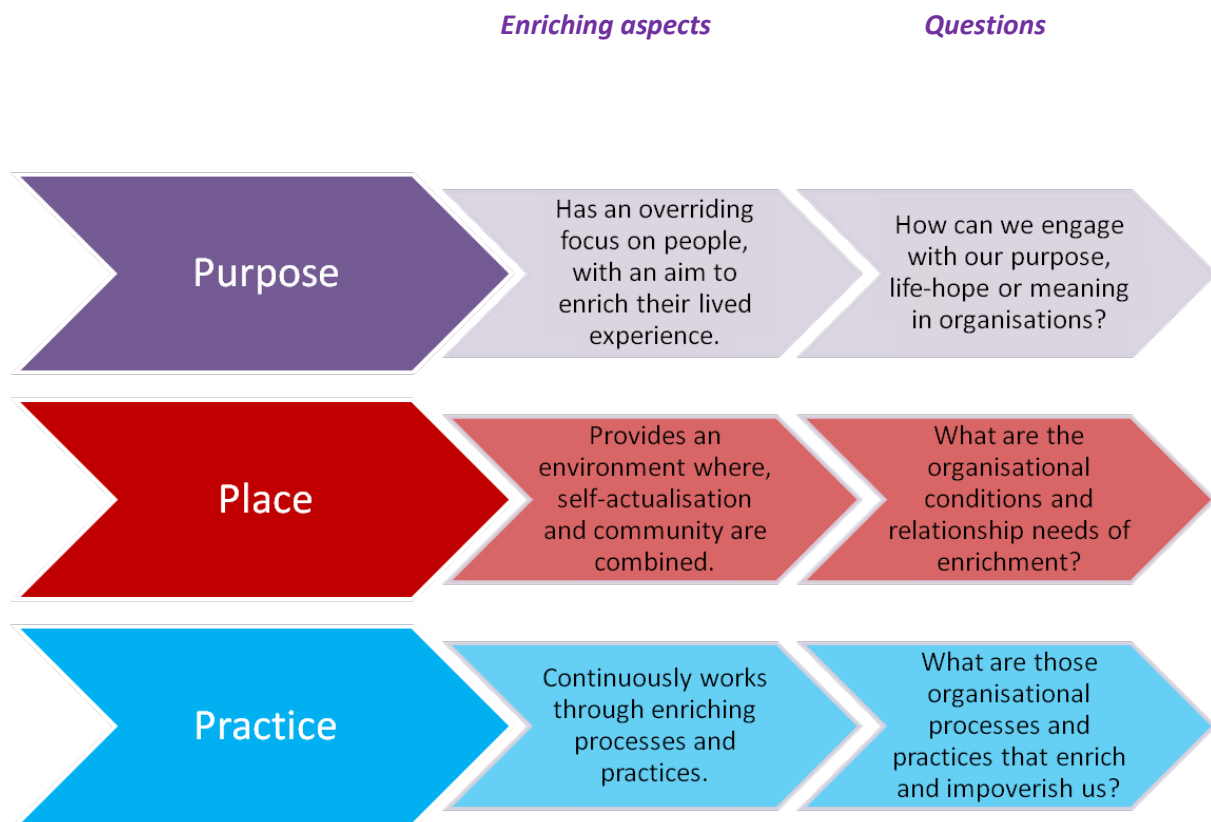
Realising, as the *Tale of Two Sisters* and my *vignettes* reveal, that many workplace experiences seemed to be less than ideal, I reflected further on the wounding dissonance I'd sometimes experienced at work. By beginning to question how that happens, I saw that, as we spend much of our lives working, helping to define us as people (Gini, 1998, p.712-714), **work appears integral to a fulfilling, meaningful or flourishing life**. I embraced the idea that work may help all of us to flourish (without, at that time, really knowing what that might mean).

Furthermore, as most organised work is done in a workplace and coupled to my OD background, it was within organisations where I felt that I should focus my attention. From this I developed an initial

posture that **organisations should be arranged to enrich the working experience in a way that benefits ourselves, our work aims, and society overall**. What I began to call an *enriching organisation*.

From this I then decided to set-out an initial overall concept of what such an organisation might denote, and thus define organisationally what my inquiry might focus on. That first stab at enriching aspects and their associated organisational questions are given in *Figure 1.4*. To me they presented something seemingly worthwhile, purposeful, and practical to offer to the civil society organisations that I work with. Determining what this might entail provided my first inquiry focus: **the implications of a focus on workplace flourishing to organisational practice**.

Figure 1.4: Initial scope for an enriching organisation:



However, I realised how these enriching aspects raise issues that go well beyond organisational practices. In other words, that, as much as there are organisational conditions and processes to consider, **it would most likely also require an awareness of our working selves to flourish** there. Hence,

I recognised that while I should inquire into the better functioning of organisations, I should also explore into how I and others might conceive of our flourishing through work.

This realisation intensified the personal focus of my inquiry and relocated it within my own evident desire to flourish through my own practice and career. Furthermore, I felt this personally grounded approach might make any outcomes more widely resonant. That, by working through my own relationship with work, I might proffer something to others that are looking to engage in questions about their own work-lives. Thus, this **personal desire to understand and deepen my own flourishing through work** became a second inquiry focus.

These foci encompass my aspiration to reveal something congruent and humanizing, both for myself and others, about how we all might flourish through work. And, although the particular context of my own practice and field gives clear boundaries to such broad aspirations, there are several subjects that expand it: human flourishing/well-being, organisational theory, action research, and work and society issues (a review of these is given in Sub-section 2.2.2.2.). So, to help concentrate my focus further and form the core of my thesis, I settled on three main inquiry questions:

1. *What constitutes Human Flourishing anyway?* To gain an insight into human flourishing – mine and others; especially through work.
2. *How do we flourish (at work)?* To better understand and define what might promote or limit human flourishing, especially in the workplace.
3. *How can (civil society) organisations foster human flourishing?* To identify what could be the qualities, capacities and attributes of an *enriching organisation* and how might we engender and develop those qualities and attributes.

Consequently, I position my thesis as: *Enriching organisations: A personal exploration into putting human flourishing at the heart of my work*. Conscious that *exploration* denotes a way to hold the inquiry lightly and an uncertainty of what would be *discovered*; without a too predetermined destination. Originating from my personal questions about work and career, it centres my own specific experience and personal aims with more general inquiries on the principles and practicalities of flourishing in organisations. Moreover, I determined the following associated inquiry aims:

- **To develop my own understanding of workplace flourishing and new perspectives on it;**

- **To lead me to some enhanced organisational development work practices that reflect my findings; and**
- **To present a compelling and accessible position on workplace flourishing that speaks to others in my civil society/OD field.**

These personal and organisational emphases and aims have meant that the sources and approaches I have used are various. As researcher-practitioner, striving to explore the different aspects of my topic, I fluctuated between conventional and non-conventional camps in an evolving effort. Indeed, as introduced above (Sub-section 1.2.3.), my way to providing a connecting coherence across the two foci was from the position and perspective of my *Purpose, Place* and *Practice motif*. These methods are covered next.

Chapter 2. - Research approach

2.1. – Methodological basis

'It matters what methodology one chooses because the choice affects one's sense of self and what one does.' (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p.42)⁴⁰

Any research approach is more than a description of the methods used, for it is important to clarify the basis of the methodology, the parameters that frame it, and ultimately the validity of claims made. In setting mine out here I might give the impression that they developed in response to a clearly delineated inquiry topic and questions. That was not so, in fact they all evolved out of the act of inquiry itself, *'...as methods that fit the particular investigation'* (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p.42), in a slow and sometimes disconcerting process. Mirroring Douglass and Moustakas's observation that: *'Throughout the investigation, one must openly and energetically accept the way in which knowledge can be most authentically revealed, be it through metaphor, description, poetry, song, dance, art, or dialogue'* (1985, p.53).

Indeed, my inquiry was informed as much as by what I sensed was the way ahead as by what was chosen. Although, initially I did not recognise this corollary and that, for my inquiry to be fundamentally exploratory and constructivist, I must also allow for the **potential for emergence** in its design and research methods. Indeed, the broad personal and organisational framing of my inquiry's purposes required this. Although it also means that to describe how I worked things out is quite involved. In this section I reveal the basis of my research methodology. The frame that my inquiry methods hang from.

⁴⁰ A startling similarity to Gini's views on work (see Section 1.3.1.); then again research is a form of work.

2.1.1. – *Accepting emergence*

Colleagues have remarked that I favour a logical, linear, and planned approach to my work. Indeed, my gradual realisation of the emerging character of my inquiry, and sometimes my doubts in its eventual outcomes, was perhaps confirming of this bias. Often, I felt uncomfortable that I could not see a supporting research pathway and, as I strove to further find a direction, my approach felt eclectic and convoluted. I was working with clients, writing reflections, holding discussions, trialling painting and reading a lot of literature, but, caught between allowing the inquiry to emerge and my desire for a clear destination, I worried whether my research process and methods were capable of revealing anything valid.

I had this need to analyse and reify, which potentially unbalanced and diluted my expression of the underlying research process; limiting my first-person, constructivist self in this. Indeed, paradoxically, through my OD practice I have become aware that much organisational change takes place in the conversations and dialogues that are part of it. Where knowledge is built or constructed within an unplanned emergence (referred to in Sub-Section 1.3.2.).

Slowly, in my research practice (described in more detail below), I could sense the different qualities that tapping into more experiential or presentational forms was bringing. The images I was making, to get behind some of the different concepts (recall *Figure 1.2: PPP Möbius*), lent a vibrancy and energy to my inquiry; showing things I couldn't express in words. Or the *vignettes*, that both helped me to access my emotions about past events or communicate them with power. They had a life that added to the discussions I was having with others.

I now see there were a number of reasons behind my struggle to credit those different ways of knowing that were arising from my inquiry. Fundamentally, I realised that my favoured work approach - sure, grounded, intentioned, expert - was pushing me towards clarifying and directive methods. I suppose there is a part of me that follows Edison's attributed focus on perspiration over inspiration.⁴¹ That working hard and deliberately at something will bring results. In me it leads to a planning and ordering focus, setting targets and endings. Even if I sense it often isn't where creativeness lies or where the main story is contained.

⁴¹ 'Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.'

Fortunately, there was a point, while not completely assuaging my planning/characterising bent, expert-mode, where a clearer understanding of John Heron's division of research inquiries into two cultures or formats - the *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* – helped me to understand something of my inquiry's and my own character. He explains that there are:

'...two different and complementary co-operative inquiry cultures. The Apollonian inquiry takes a more rational, linear, systematic, controlling and explicit approach to the process of cycling between reflection and action. ... The Dionysian inquiry takes a more imaginal, expressive, spiralling, diffuse, impromptu and tacit approach to the interplay between making sense and action.' (1996, p.45-46)

Furthermore, he exposes the tension I was experiencing:

'The content of the inquiry as a whole, with all that goes on in its phases of reflection and action, cannot be preplanned; and the preplanning of an action phase in the Apollonian cultures is piecemeal, done one at a time, each plan emerging from what has gone before. So ... any inquiry in its overall format has a predominantly emergent or Dionysian format.' (1996, p.47)

That revelatory moment came in August 2013 when recalling a trip to Greece and how I went to visit a little-known temple site just north of Athens, *The Sanctuary of Dionysus*. I arrived to find it closed, but tucked into the fence was an extract of a paper about the site. Its title showed that the sanctuary had been for the worship of both Dionysus and Apollo. Tellingly the ancient Greeks could find balance between the characters of both gods, understanding their different attributes, and yet containing them in the same location. This liberated my thinking on how there is **a complementarity between the Apollonian and Dionysian inquiry cultures** and that I should appreciate these (my) two dimensions of my inquiry. As Marshall and Reason opine:

'While any effective inquiry will have some elements of both cultures, even when the emphasis is tilted toward one pole rather than the other, we would suggest that it is often the Dionysian element that brings the additional edge of liveliness to the rationality of the Apollonian and brings what we are calling here 'an attitude of inquiry'.' (2008, p.63)

Having this *freer-hold* over my research process felt truer to the exploratory; in that *'it permits shifts in method according to the vagaries of experience as one vigorously pursues heuristic knowledge'* (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p.45, my emphasis). Furthermore, noting fluctuation between the Apollonian and Dionysian natures of inquiry also revealed something of my own character. By better appreciating how **my own sense-making was more emergent and evolving than I had assumed**, and that **my linear/expert-bent is more an expression of my intent to condense, clarify, and communicate ideas**. As I struggled to deal with the different ways of knowing within my research and ultimately how it

reflects in my own needs to flourish, both had to feature in my research approach and in its telling. To **mirror the inquiry and mirror the man** has meant that I needed to include this important aspect of my first-person tale.

Originally, I had seen them as two contrary elements of my inquiry, separate from myself somewhat, but, incrementally, by facing this constructivist-positivist conflict in my inquiry, I recognise how this is an aspect of my own character. Something that is representative in my own conundrum to flourish through my work. Where I am somehow relying on this expected expert/professional mode, fearful even of moving from it, yet feeling how the open/emergent/unplanned side of me is somehow necessary for my flourishing too. This restriction-freedom axis echoes across my work, I fluctuate between them, looking for a way to balance their influence on me. This is something I have not quite resolved, perhaps only resolvable when I am in a work-life situation that affords me to be freer; the comfort of liberation.

In the introduction I mention how I am the main character in this thesis. So, I have tried to balance my clarifying/refining presentation by revealing something of this epistemic journey via another layer of reflective-narration on my inquiry process. By including it throughout in the text, I've tried to reveal the choices I made as I inquired, alongside the moments of uncertainty and of insight, that have led to the positions I've developed and those questions I still hold. In short, building-up where I am now as researcher/practitioner. My written first-person voice is typically a gentler, considering one, that comes from the present and speaks to the future. So, to make this additional-voice noticeable in the text it is given in *Cambria italics* and *shaded*. It first appears above.

2.1.2. – Leaning on an action research approach

Beyond this requirement for emergence, the practical nature of inquiring with organisations and based on personal work experiences provided further context. As, *Action Research* (AR) '*...has a complex history because it is not a single academic discipline but an approach to research that has emerged from a broad range of fields*' (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003, p.11), it appeared that it was within this field that these could be found; to source an appropriate approach. Indeed, a commonly quoted definition shows that AR:

'...seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.1)

A colleague once commented to me that the action research field is somewhat like ancient Greek (then again) or Roman religion, being: *"an agglomeration of practices linked by a series of principles that can be selected from and built upon to develop an approach of one's own."* It is a pertinent observation and matches my experience and others' views that: *'action research is not a methodology, but an approach that shapes methodological practices'* (Reason & McArdle, 2008, p.19) and leads to *'an orientation to inquiry'* (2008, p.3). This was important, because it **reflects the choosing/emergence of those methodological practices and methods that were appropriate to my inquiry:**

'As such it is full of choices... action researchers must endeavour to make appropriate choices in different situations. ...[and] a key dimension of quality is to be aware of the choices, consider them well, and to make those choices clear, transparent, articulate, to yourselves, to your inquiry partners, and, when you start writing and presenting, to the wider world.' (2008, p.19)

According to Reason and McArdle, Reason and Bradbury's definition of action research above: *'...brings together five dimensions of action research: it is pragmatic... it is democratic... draws on an 'extended epistemology'... it is value oriented... and it is developmental...'* (2008, p.4). Further to this, other aspects of action research can be noted; from the main stages of the inquiry cycle, to issues of epistemology and political participation, validation, and ways of developing an inquiry (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2006). Together they **suggest a frame for my inquiry to lean on** and highlight methodological choices within it. I cover them below.

The practical – pragmatic - application of an action research approach surely links to the applied nature of my thesis. With my focus on personal and organisational practice: *'Action research is research into current, ongoing practice by practitioners for practitioners. Its focus is on problem-solving in existing professional performance and related organisational structures'* (Heron, 1996, p.7). Setting an expectation that **the outcomes or implications of my thesis should be practical and applied;** matching my research aims. Indeed, this brings forth the issue of validity of the eventual outcomes, but I refer to this later (see Section 2.3.).

Moreover, as related earlier (Sub-section 1.3.2), I've inquired based on the primacy of experience (both mine and that of others) in constructing knowledge, there was a connection with an additional methodological stance: *'We would ... argue that all research needs to be grounded in an in-depth, critical and practical experience of the situation to be understood and acted in'* (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p.11).

Usually that *situation* is approached from one of three AR levels, personal, group, societal, or preferably a combination of them.⁴² However, my inquiry was primarily located in my work/practice circumstances (so *first-person* focussed) and to opportunities for extension to others. These were largely determined by my working context as an NGO consultant (*informal and formal second-person*). I approximated this with Marshall's '*...engaging in inner and outer arcs of attention and of moving between them*' (2001, p.433) and which '*involves reaching outside myself in some way*' (2001, p.434).

Marshall, Coleman, and Reason (2011) expand on how first-person action research is an evolving and connected process, again supporting my eventual approach, as it:

'...asks the individual to discover something by doing, and reflecting, and in the light of that reflection, doing some more. It brings the kind of knowing that is only generated through action into connection with the kind of knowing that comes through reading, listening and discussing ideas with others. It places responsibility, with knowing as something in process, continually evolving, ever provisional and to be tested.' (p.18, my emphasis)

This presented the need for an inquiry practice that sustains a *doing and reflection* cycle. Emphasising that my inquiry included the participation of others. Indeed, as Douglass and Moustakas say (of heuristic inquiry), it '*...begins with immersion, self-dialogue, and self-exploration, and then moves to explore the nature of others' experiences*' (1985, p.43). In my case I sought this via my client work, what I call *Practice Case Studies* (see Sub-section 2.2.1.1.), approximating with *Clinical Inquiry/Research* formats (Schein, 2006) or complexity research cases (Stacey & Griffin, 2005).

Indeed, Stacey and Griffin's notes to Bjørner Christensen's chapter on consultation as research highlight that '*Action researchers are ... both researchers and consultants at the same time*' (2005, p.74).

Resonance with my situation was plain. However, I was conscious that my client work could only perhaps be at best an *informal* second-person level of inquiry (*clinicalesque?*). So, I convened a *Peer Inquiry Group* to attempt a formal second-person level of inquiry (see Sub-Section 2.2.1.2) and to address what Etherington points out: '*If human knowledge is co-constructed, then any research project must involve some degree of mutual exploration and discovery*' (2004, p.22).

How the Peer group came together is revealing of how I find going out with my work to be difficult at times. Paradoxically, I've realised that, while noting that my need for working in community others is a big part of my flourishing, finding enough belief in my ideas to expose them to others continues to be a stumbling block to doing so. Perhaps I'm being hard on myself, but I've come to see this reluctance as a

⁴² Otherwise known as first-, second-, or third-person inquiries (Reason & McArdle, 2008, p.7).

kind of handicap, one which reflects that underlying expert/knowning that I want in order have sureness. I now see that my convening of this group was more about building a safe reflection space for myself, rather than a true co-inquiry. And, while reinforcing the first-person stance of my thesis, I now sense something of a missed opportunity. Yet, pushing myself outwards, towards authentic activity in society, is something I continue to struggle with.

Another AR dimension presented another validity requirement, that of entertaining a broader, or extended, epistemology. This action research stance is rather different from that found in positivist-quantitative research and, as it has implications towards research methods, merits dwelling on a little. In Western society, words, and especially the written word (the propositional), traditionally have academic primacy to contain and express knowing. *'Propositional knowledge is regarded both as pre-eminent and self-sufficient. It rules over other kinds of knowledge...'* (Heron, 1996, p.33). Heron gives a good reasoning why this is so and then argues against this epistemological bias by presenting an assemblage of four types of knowing:

'...intellectual or propositional knowledge, together with the validating principles internal to it, is interdependent with three other kinds of knowledge: practical knowledge, that is evident in knowing how to exercise a skill; presentational knowledge, evident in intuitive grasp of the significance of imaginal patterns as expressed in graphic, plastic, moving, musical and verbal art-forms; and experiential knowledge, evident only in actually meeting and feeling the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. These three other basic kinds of knowledge also have validating principles internal to them.' (1996, p.33, my emphasis)

Tapping into this more encompassing way of knowing was methodologically important (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p.9; Heron, 1996, p.36):

'Action research also draws on many ways of knowing – extending the rationalist, propositional ways of knowing on which conventional knowledge-generation is based, to include practical, experiential, presentational, emotional, embodied and intuitive ways of discovering and surfacing what an individual or a group 'knows'.' (Marshall et al., 2011, p.18, my emphasis)

It leads to the reflective writing and artful practices that you have seen already and are described below. However, this position has led to an assertion by some that there is an epistemological hierarchy where practical knowing (one that confirms being) is the pinnacle of knowing (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p.8). As Heron relates:

'To say that practice consummates the prior forms of knowing on which it is grounded, is to say that it takes the knowledge quest beyond justification, beyond the concern for validity and truth-values, into the celebration of being-values, by showing them forth. It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action.' (1996, p.34)

With a connection to flourishing, it's a compelling idea. That the first three ways of knowing lead on to, or support, one another and underpin practical knowing. But, from my inquiry experience, I became unsure of this. I would say there is more of a blurry, complimentary, concurrent and circular relationship between them (Heron, 1992, p.122, quoted in Seeley & Thornhill, 2014, p.31). Surely, *being-values* are also tied up in experience and presentation, and I am uncomfortable with replacing the primacy of one form of knowing with another.

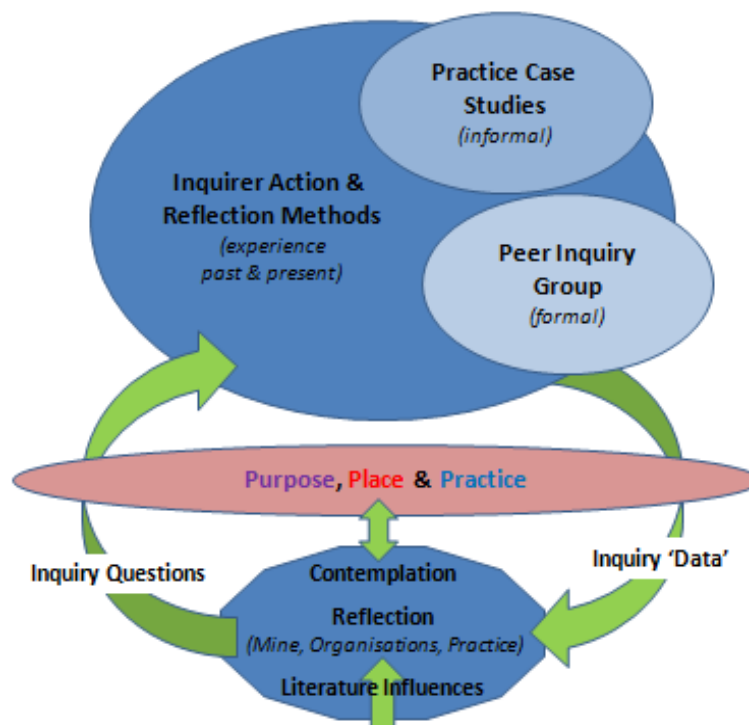
Whatsoever, I **now valued how personal revelations from my inquiries, via presentational or experiential knowing, could be combined with other forms of knowing/inquiry** and how they revealed a research practice (*'methodology must be grounded in an epistemology'* (Harris, 2008)). The several ways in which I have looked to *tap into* these other ways of knowing are covered below under research methods (Sub-section 2.2.2.1).

2.1.3. – Into a methodological framework

As mentioned above, my research approach has necessarily developed alongside my inquiry actions themselves, rather than me conventionally setting out an approach from the beginning. The **methodological framework presented here effectively evolved from the constellation of methods (inspired by AR approaches) I was using to approach my inquiry questions**. I feel this matches Douglass and Moustakas's view on how *'The steps of heuristic inquiry unfold spontaneously, yet they are guided by a desire to illuminate the phenomenon'* (1985, p.45). Some might criticise it for being eclectic, yet a synonym of eclectic is *diverse*.⁴³ Indeed, I felt my complex and convoluted topic of workplace flourishing suggested diversity in my approach. Here, I try to clarify what this means by bringing everything together in one *methodological framework* (Figure 2.1.).

⁴³ I noted how in Greek *eklektikos* translates as selective and that the *Eclectics* were *'a group of ancient philosophers who ... tried to select the doctrines that seemed to them most reasonable, and out of these constructed a new system'* (IEP, 2016).

Figure 2.1: Research Methodology



The upper-half shows the main **Action & Reflection** places of my inquiry; where I investigated into my own experiences; considering past examples, or those of the present within the **Practice Case Studies**. The **Peer Inquiry Group** contributed by being a place to go *outside* with the inquiry ideas; gaining others insights. These *inquiry locations* (covered in Sub-section 2.2.1.) were connected to my *inquiry practices* (see Sub-section 2.2.2.) and their reflexive nature and varied epistemological stances. Together they formed a research methodology to match the exploratory requirements of my thesis. It includes both actions and reflections alone and with others. Stacey and Griffin's words nicely echo my experience:

'Since experience is relating between self and other, the appropriate research method is essentially reflexive in two senses. First, the individual researcher is required to reflect upon his or her own life history and how this has shaped the manner in which he or she reflects upon experience. Second, there is a social form of reflexivity requiring the researcher to locate his or her ways of making sense of experience in the wider traditions of thought that have evolved in the history of human interaction... Research, from this perspective, is not an activity which is separate from practice because the reflective practitioner is ... inevitably also a researcher in that both are engaged in reflecting upon their own experience.' (2005, p.10)

The left-hand arrow shows how my **Inquiry Questions** - three specific ones - helped to focus the inquiry **Action & Reflection** above. The right-hand arrow is where the **Inquiry 'Data'** that was generated was

brought into the lower **Contemplation** space. This represents my reflection on: my flourishing, that of organisations, and practice in general. Plus, importantly, where the influences from literature and doctoral supervision entered my thesis.

Between these Action-Reflection and Contemplation *levels* comes the **Purpose, Place and Practice Motif** (introduced in Sub-section 1.2.3.), which acts as a *linking-device* to give direction to my inquiry questions and as the *lens* to view the data coming out of the inquiry. It's the *reflective-membrane* through which I filtered my findings, containing and structuring them in *PPP* terms. The arrow connecting the Contemplation level and the *PPP motif* denotes where I could bring my findings and realisations back into the *PPP* (see Chapter 6.).

In terms of an action research approach this framework provided separate, yet indistinct, cycles of action and reflection. When I say indistinct I mean there was a tangible, if untidy, cycling of ideas and views within the inquiry, which, although not perhaps the classic action-reflection, co-operative inquiry, was driven by a *first-person* engagement with the inquiry questions in various settings. John Seidel's description approximates to my experience:

'...you do not simply Notice, Collect, and then Think about things, and then write a report. Rather, the process has the following characteristics:

- **Iterative and Progressive:** *The process is iterative and progressive because it is a cycle that keeps repeating. For example, when you are thinking about things you also start noticing new things in the data. You then collect and think about these new things. ...*
- **Recursive:** *The process is recursive because one part can call you back to a previous part. For example, while you are busy collecting things you might simultaneously start noticing new things to collect.*
- **Holographic⁴⁴:** *The process is holographic in that each step in the process contains the entire process. For example, when you first notice things you are already mentally collecting and thinking about those things.'* (1998, p.2, my emphasis)

Overall, I believe that this combination of literature research, personal reflection on the past and in the present to develop narratives and ideas, and then to further explore with others, represents a **pragmatic methodology for my broad, but inward-questioning, practice-based inquiry**. And, to my mind, in its presentation allows for '*...a triangulation of research findings, practitioner wisdoms and ... [client/peer] perspectives*' (Jones, 2004, p.11). It might, fairly, be critiqued for being both partly-open and partly-closed to the reader, or reliant on literature and theory whilst also claiming reflexivity. Yet, I would

⁴⁴ I would say holistic.

counter that, if it is unconventional, by **genuinely reflecting the intentional and *awareful* aspects of my exploration** it supported the creation of the knowledge described in the later chapters.

2.2. – Research elements: locations and practices

It's now appropriate to say something of the main inquiry locations where the research took place and also those inquiry practices that I used across them. Providing further definition to *Figure 2.1.*, so that as a reader you might more easily follow my storying over the coming chapters; to recognise how what is told there was revealed. While each part is presented individually, as I explored each of my inquiry questions, they were usually employed in some combination.

2.2.1. – Inquiry locations

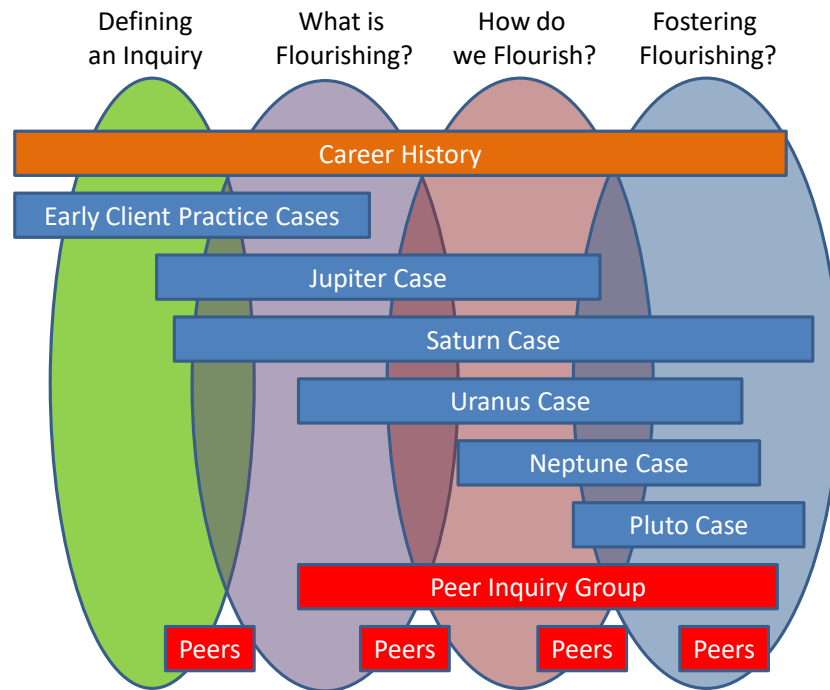
As well as a further consideration of my career experiences, the main interactive inquiry locations that I could draw from were either through peer discussions or where I worked with my CSO clients. Work with clients, what I call *Practice Case Studies*, was in some ways opportunistic, but they **provided a space to explore my work-practice and flourishing in an organisational context**. The conversations that I had with my peers were either informal, as with Kate and Louise, or more formal with my *Peer Inquiry Group*. They **provided an opportunity for emergence through open discussion**.

The following figure identifies those places or contexts where my inquiries took place. Those in blue boxes are the *Practice Case Studies*, where I engaged with the inquiry questions through the work I was doing with my civil society clients (names are explained later). Those in the red boxes denote those conversations with my peers held throughout the inquiry; notably the *Peer Inquiry Group*. The orange box Career History, signifies my considerations on my past work.

I've mapped them over the four main *inquiry phases*; my three inquiry questions and the earlier efforts to define the inquiry itself. While the left to right orientation of them does in some sense denote time, it is best to view this as showing how these inquiry locations generally supported each inquiry question.

Indeed, it was never so linear, my ideas cycled back and forth, and within each I utilised different inquiry practices.

Figure 2.2: Inquiry locations



2.2.1.1. - Practice case studies

Wicks and Reason reveal that for an effective inquiry:

‘...we need to have the ability to establish relations with an appropriate grouping of people, which means we must either have some access to the communities we are concerned about, or we need to develop legitimacy and the capacity to convene that goes alongside it.’ (2009, p.244)

Previously I have organised co-operative inquiries in my workplace, but now, free-lance, my work is usually both short-term and focussed on the specific organisational needs of my clients. I was initially concerned that I lacked the appropriate *access* for my inquiry. Then, I comprehended that, as researcher-practitioner, much of my knowledge comes from the work I am doing. This practice

dimension was **a way to realise my inquiry within my daily work**; a Dionysian-opportunity to reflect on my own 'inner story' (Etherington, 2004, p.29). Indeed, Ed Schein, who elaborated the concept of *Clinical Inquiry* (Schein, 2004, p.207–211; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p.57), reveals:

'We ... used illustrations from our consulting experience to a much greater extent than 'findings' from traditional research. ... For many ... researchers ... exposure to members of organizations serves as their primary data base about what goes on in organizations.' (2006, p.190)

Having an affinity to the *Clinical Inquiry/Research* formats introduced by Schein (2006, p.186),⁴⁵ I recognised that his focus originates from the client's identification of need (Schein, 2004, p.208).

Whereas my focus on human flourishing was my research agenda. Essentially, I was '*borrowing the battlefield*' (Wilson, 2013, p.16), rather in a *clinicalesque*-fashion, **to consider how I flourished in my working context and how my practice and the organisational issues I was working on connect with workplace flourishing.**

Peppered across this thesis are references to the dialogues and actions taken in my work (case *vignettes*) where I try to show how they have informed my thesis. Their representation herein is akin to that of Patricia Shaw's in *Changing Conversations in Organizations* (2002). These cases are primarily set within my work with NGOs, foundations and international organisations. Fortunately, the issues covered and the clients I worked with were many and varied, allowing for a diverse inquiry space. The main cases and their core issues are summarised in *Figure 2.3.*, I use the names of planets to ensure anonymity and indicate their order.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Perhaps the closest would be '*Cell 5: High researcher, low client involvement – contract research and expert consulting*' (Schein, 2006, p.189).

⁴⁶ During the inquiry I worked with twelve organisations.

Figure 2.3: Main practice case studies

<i>Pseudonym/type</i>	<i>My task/inquiry connections</i>
MERCURY International Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme planning and proposal development • Lessons on workplace flourishing from a large bureaucracy
VENUS Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on organisational development and capacity building issues • Considering where my advice might support workplace flourishing
JUPITER Civil Society Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational development and capacity building support • Reflecting on my role as a external consultant, and how I and others flourish
SATURN Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational and staff development support • Considering how to bring flourishing aspects into the thoughts and conversation of an organisation
URANUS Civil Society Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational capacity assessment and development planning • Putting practice lessons (enriching aspects) into my OD approach
NEPTUNE Civil Society Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management, evaluation and appraisal system development • Developing ideas on these issues in an enriching organisation
PLUTO Civil Society Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational assessment, structure, and process planning • Understanding relatedness and my workplace flourishing

The JUPITER, SATURN and URANUS cases straddled much of the core inquiry period, so they feature repeatedly. Some of the earlier cases, the inner-planets, whilst not covered, were instrumental in the development of my inquiry's themes. NEPTUNE produced important ideas on performance issues and leadership, while PLUTO came at a time when I was considering much about my own flourishing. Each case was worked out as a separate paper (see the URANUS example in Annex 4.1.), which I draw upon and present as case *vignettes*, and gave context to the issues I was reflecting on more widely.

2.2.1.2. - Peer interaction

The *informal* discussions with friends and colleagues about the inquiry, such as those with Kate and Louise, had, through the *public exercising* of my topic, already led to important insights. Indeed, I

wanted to generate more of the vitality that these conversations had injected into my research. So, as I began to delve into the three inquiry questions (Section 1.4.) and the inquiry became better defined, I recognised a desire to go out to others to expose and inquire into my developing ideas. As Etherington reveals:

‘In discussion with others, we can co-construct new meanings in response to their critical reflections and our own. This critical, external reflecting allows us to check for distortions in our interpretations that might be based on past experiences held outside our full awareness, ...’
(2004. p.29)

Indeed, Marshall *et al.*, explain how in AR terms: *‘Second-person inquiry offers a form within which people can explore important issues together; [and] this can be challenging and supportive’* (2011, p.32). So, I enrolled several professional contacts to be members of a *Peer Inquiry Group* with a focus on experience sharing in mind. The eight persons were specifically chosen from related organisational development or civil society fields (see *Figure 2.4.*).

Figure 2.4: Peer Inquiry Group members

Adriana Crăciun	• Senior Advisor, Organisational Development and Capacity Building, Oak Foundation, Switzerland
Andreas Beckmann	• Director, Danube Carpathian Programme, WWF, Austria
James Friel	• Formerly CEO, Black Environment Network; now at Citizen's Advice Bureau, UK
Laura Lewin	• Director, Talent Catalyst, UK
Liz Marsden	• Freelance Confidence and Motivation Coach, UK
Mark Saalfeld	• Fund Portfolio Manager, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Switzerland
Nicholas Lander	• Anonymised: Senior manager in an international organisation working with Civil Society.
Simona Popovici	• Formerly Group Organizational Development Director, Coca Cola Hellenic Bottling Company, Greece; now at Rompetrol

They provided a **forum to engage with professional peers as co-inquirers** (where that: ‘...involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it ... and reflecting together on it’ (Heron, 1996, p.1)) and who might offer field-specific inputs and personal reflections.⁴⁷

I should make it clear that they did not meet together as a group (geography and availability was a barrier) and, although they did see and commented upon one another’s words, they only interacted directly with me. Despite these provisos my interactions with the *Peers* proved to be rewarding; testing old ideas or providing new ones via a second-person level of inquiry. As such, they were a useful sounding board for my developing ideas; throughout I indicate how our conversations directly influenced my thesis.

The voices of the *Peers* appear throughout these pages so I should explain our main interactions:

- The **first round** of inquiry started by sending *A Tale of Two Sisters*, to gain initial interest and early feedback. Their responses provided new ideas, posed some testing questions, and underlined my assumptions.
- The **second inquiry** round sprang from a question well-being whether researchers had tested their understanding of human flourishing (Hone, Jarden, Schofield, & Duncan, 2014, p.72). I spoke with each peer on what flourishing said to them in relation to their professional experiences; collating over fifteen hours of recordings. These were brought together in a discussion paper that was shared with the whole group and formed the basis to my *notion of workplace flourishing* (see Section 3.3.).
- The **third round** revolved around whether our momentary sensations of flourishing actually contributed to a long-term, or evaluative, sense of flourishing, and whether we could identify what caused that. Each of us kept a work diary for a month, simply jotting down how we felt about each day, then noting what it was about the day that made it so. Together we produced some 104 days of diary entries. These reflections particularly supported issues around *how we flourish* (see Chapter 4.).
- A **fourth round**, towards the end of the inquiry, comprised a request for their continuing reflections.

⁴⁷ Some may decry a lack of representativeness or scale, but my purpose was not to gather quantitative sample data.

2.2.2. – Inquiry practices

As I looked to investigate each question - usually within, but also without of the locations described above - a cluster of *inquiry practices* evolved. They are inspired by AR's requirement for an extended epistemology and simple practicality in approaching the subject. Some of these reflective practices are already shown (*vignettes*, painting), they, and the others described here (musing diary, walking/cycling), were, by broadening my inquiry epistemologically, my **main means for entering into the inquiry at a personal-insightful level.**

As the focus of my thesis was on my work I clearly had to consider my inquiry questions within my work practice. The challenge I had was to identify those reflective inquiry practices that could be a part of it and yet, in different ways, would allow for emergence of thought and ideas. You will see reference to them in the following chapters and the corresponding issues that they revealed. However, it is necessary to say something here of how this Tolstoian-*mélange* was concocted, where they fitted within the inquiry locations, and how they served the inquiry.

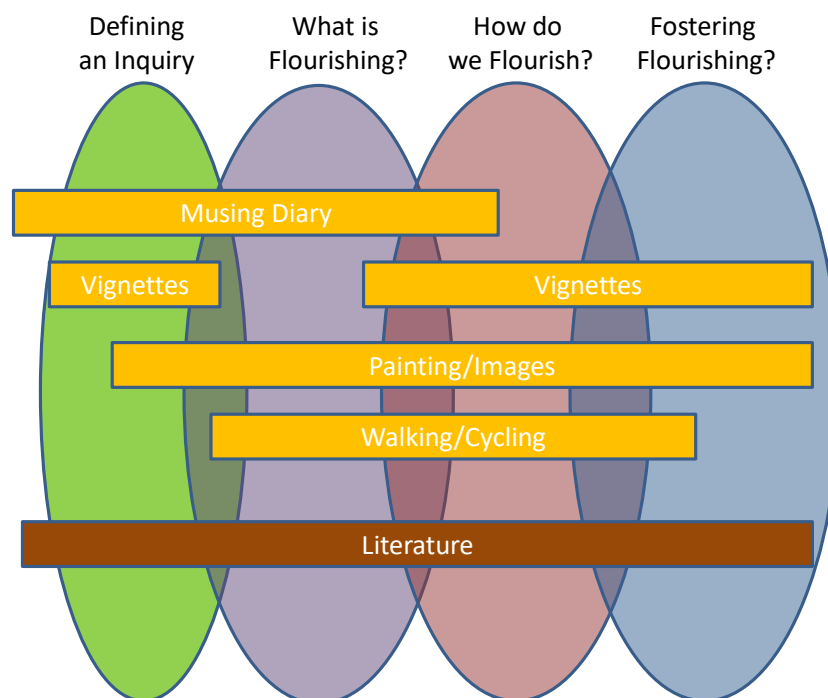
I have always taken rough notes as I work and it seemed normal to me to continue this and deepen it as a way to capture my ongoing reflections and to partly formalise them (record keeping in my musing diary). The other practices developed, or were recognised, rather alongside the work and musing I was doing. For example, I came to realise how the reflections I do when I walk or cycle have always been an aspect of how I make sense of things. So sometimes I tapped into the potential of this by getting out, ruminating on the go as it were, capturing impressions in my notebook. Also, I have always had a penchant for art and images and, while not an accomplished painter, quite early I was making pictures to represent the more difficult concepts I was dealing with (notably around the *PPP Motif* or my experiences in the cases). I realised how, as I worked with my clients, ideas came to me of images that captured something of the essence of my work experience.

Blending together these methods provided the reflective spaces for my inquiry. For example, my musings were often the source material for the other reflective practices, including many of the ideas for the images I have painted or *vignettes* that I wrote. So, as I was thinking about my inquiry questions and those issues that came out of the cases or discussions with the *Peers* and how they sat within the *PPP Motif*, my notes were broadened into the *vignettes* or transformed at some point to make images.

Thus, the different practices described below were combined, either opportunistically or with intent, to catch ideas or make sense of my working experiences.

They've allowed me to engage in a more reflective manner with the written data coming out of the *Peer* discussions or the literature and helped me to get behind workplace flourishing issues with a different quality. Note *Figure 1.2., PPP Möbius* and how its living quality is so different from the written ideas I started with in *Figure 1.1.*, or the sensations given in *Vignettes 1* and *2* and their more personal qualities that connect with the experience being related (further examples are given below).

Figure 2.5: Inquiry practices



Beside them I also considered a broad range of related literature, a conventional, but vital, source of ideas and inspiration. Literature helped me to locate my inquiry within wider organisational and well-being issues. *Figure 2.5.*, depicts these practices, with the four methods that revolved around personal reflection/contemplation in yellow and the use of literature in brown.

With the elaboration of my inquiry approach from these different locations and practices, I noted how I was mirroring the way that I like to work in general. This blending of different places and methods into an expansive, yet coherent (at least to me), whole underlines a key value I hold for my work; and thereby to how I seemingly flourish through my work. With variety, craft, creativity, connecting to others, working across media and an assortment of theoretical ideas. Eclecticism in the sense of diversity, it sparks my interest, engages me, and gives me satisfaction where it comes together and reveals something new. I wonder, if I cannot bring my work to coherence, do I sense this as a failing and my engagement wains?

2.2.2.1. - Personal reflection

'...whosoever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he does think, opine, reason, hope, feare, &c, and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men, upon the like occasions.' (Hobbes, 2005, p.3)

This quote from Hobbes rather nicely captures an essential point of personal reflection. Where it serves to deepen my own understanding of the questions I hold, it might then lead to knowledge that is potentially valid for others. Furthermore, my desire to be more reflective and aware went beyond developing a research practice for my inquiry to hopefully refining my work-practice. This connects with Heron's views on the role of inquiry and practice (1996, p.34 & 55) and Marshall's direct link between *'...research as political process and as life process...'* (2001, p.433). The development, use, and qualities of the four *reflective practices* used across my inquiry follow:

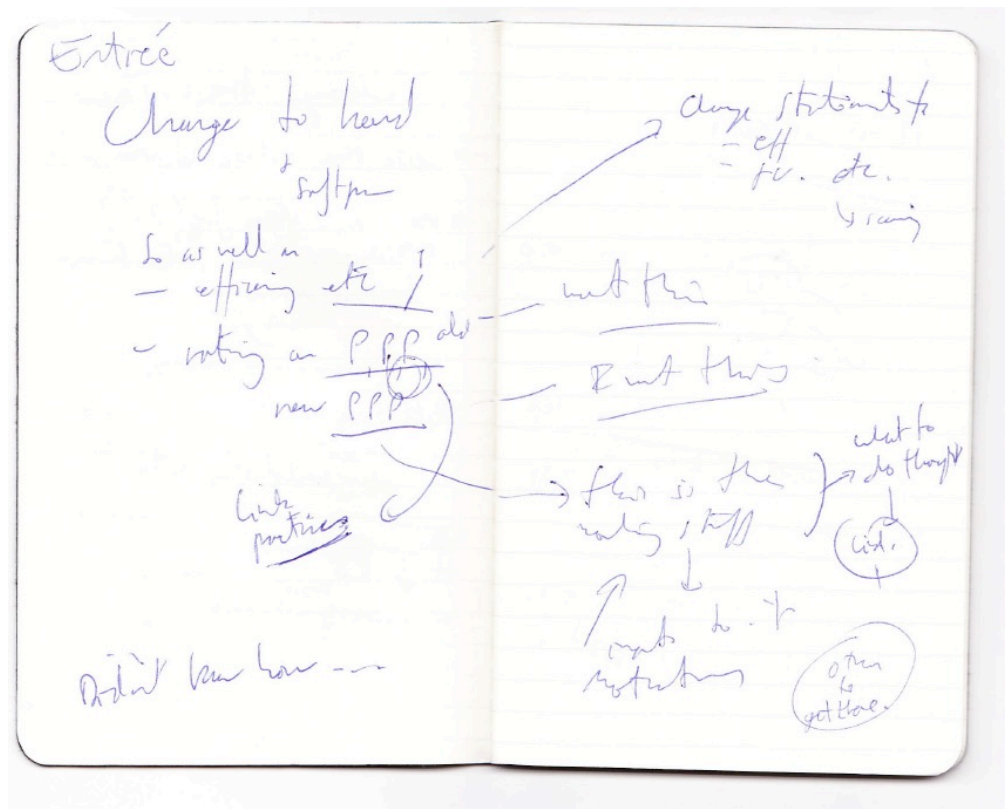
Noting - musing diary

I carry a notebook with me everywhere I go, where I jot down my thoughts and ideas. Often on public transport, after answering an e-mail, chatting with colleagues, or when working with my clients. Throughout the inquiry I've typed these up into a roughly ordered and dated file called *musings*, they are snippets of conversation, short free-fall reflections, or even diagrams. I am not a natural diarist (check my handwriting below!) and my use of the notebook and file has fluctuated. However, **this logging of both events and ideas supported both the emergence of ideas and further reflection**. For example, the *Tale of Two Sisters* above was formed from those notes I took at the time.

I have used these notes, and my associated reflection alongside them, to build-up threads that reverberate across the inquiry. Like *micro-inquiries*, they are where the various ideas on workplace

flourishing that I carry around with me converge with the people I meet and the experiences I have. As such, this recording of both actions and ideas provided much to the content of my inquiry. Seemingly fitting its exploratory and emergent stance. Indeed, they are a physical representation of much of my reflection so it is worth saying something more of how this inquiry practice contributed to the inquiry process.

Figure 2.6: Sample 'musings' page



Principally, most of the conversations and events during my client cases were collected in these musings. Sometimes reporter style at the time and sometimes later on. They represent ‘...notes of what people say, not every word but keeping track as best I can, noting what seem to be key phrases or ways of formulating meanings, minimizing translating into my languages and frames’ (Marshall, 2001, p.434). In the *case vignettes* that are associated with them I *reconstruct*, in an exploratory way, the emotions and feelings of what was going on. Leading to various *revelations* that are noted alongside them.

Indeed, many of the ideas that I recorded in my notes were worked through via the other inquiry practices, leading to influential lines of thought. For example, when thinking of *Place* in my *PPP Motif* (see Section 6.1.1., [A place to stand](#), and Figure 6.2.) I recalled a story about a bird flying through an

Anglo-Saxon hall that led to an image that, connected to my discussions with others, influenced my reflection on what *Place* meant for my flourishing through work.

In a way this note taking allowed me to capture my reflections around *PPP* and workplace flourishing and to cycle between contemporary (cases, *Peer* discussions) and past experiences. Such as, when I felt stuck, or remembering an old point in my walks or bike rides, I went back to these notes for inspiration. As I inquired this *re-reviewing* allowed me to cycle through my captured thoughts. A repetition and deepening which built-up ideas and threads that reverberated with me and was ‘...essential to this stream of inquiring...’ (Marshall, 2001, p.433). It is difficult to express this personal ongoing cycling of thought and their influences in the inquiry process, but throughout I refer to occasions where I draw from them.

Reflective writing – vignettes

During the early stages of defining my inquiry topic, I had started by writing a series of personal positions supported by recollections from my career. While I found them useful to highlight my inquiry’s theme a hiatus followed this first use, originating from concerns I had towards the veracity of my accounts. Feeling there was potential for advocating overly and succumbing to self-confirmation.

Indeed, the impression I have of some first-person AR writing is that the claims made do not always equate with the stated experience. Or that they were self-indulgent, obvious, or overblown; the epic out of the mundane. Reason and Torbert have noted this dilemma (2001, p.6), as does Marshall: ‘*I do not, however, want to tell ‘confessional tales’ to no purpose... This is an edge which needs awareness, and when we write from inquiry it requires appropriate signalling*’ (1999, p.4).⁴⁸

Yet, I eventually returned with enthusiasm to this as an inquiry practice when I gauged the reaction of the *Peer Inquiry Group* and others to the *Tale of Two Sisters*. How they could connect to it in a way that my *drier* writing didn’t, and realising, after authoring a very personal piece (undisclosed here) during a writing workshop, how it helped me to get behind a difficult issue about purpose.

Indeed, I’ve found developing these written *vignettes*, or short essays, to be useful for *unlocking* and reflecting on recent and past work events and experiences. By allowing me to examine when and how I

⁴⁸ Also, Marshall, 2001, p.433; 2011, p.249.

flourish or not in my work, they became an important part of my first-person inquiry process. So, it is important to say more on what this material is and how was it arrived at?

Essentially, the *vignettes* are written reflective pieces through which I attempt to both explore and convey a particular mood or experience; expressing a work situation and searching into myself about what it reveals. By taking my musing notes further they vary from a few hundred to fifteen hundred words. Through a brief story, where dialogue or description is largely constructed from clear recollections of events or the essence of a memory, I look to reveal my inner-thoughts.

They were prompted at various points of the inquiry, either as I engaged in my work (action) or more contemplatively (reflection). Consequently, you will find two main types of *vignette* herein:

- Those that are closer in time to an event, usually related to my client case work. Which became a way for me to express what was going on at the heart of each case – an evaluation of the situation - and are thus part-reportage and part-reflection. By being compiled directly from my notes, they effectively summarise key portions of my client cases that I try to use to support my questioning.
- Those reflective of seemingly important events in my past, where something in my inquiry prompted me to think back to an occasion or an experience. In them I recreate, from my memory, what it is that encapsulates something important about my work flourishing (and linked to the *realisation points* or *career narratives* that I mention in Section 3.3.).

It means that those *vignettes* related to the cases are developed from the ongoing stream of the inquiry process (partly Apollonian in their context), while the others were much more emergent that I linked back to the inquiry (Dionysian). Thus, they were either written immediately after an event or as part of my wider storying process. To differentiate them the two types are marked, in their title, as either case related or past reflections and are dated accordingly.

As a piece of first-person research, they illustrate my inquiry's constructivist underpinnings and *how I know what I know* was built from the inquiry. I became aware, especially with those that recollect past events, that they are actually representative of my current developing outlook. In the constructivist terms of this inquiry they are no less valid for that; contributing much to my understanding of my own workplace flourishing by revealing important points and passions. I am showing today's person by

contemplating on previous experiences that have helped to construct today's understanding⁴⁹; charmingly illustrated by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: '...it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then' (1998, p.155).⁵⁰

As I focussed on question two (*How do we flourish?*), I noted how my *vignettes* were marked by a more open style. I felt a *creative plunge* with the writing almost driving itself. Now the pieces were drafted at speed, away from my desk. I wrote as I recalled and things came to me - an exploratory-reflection – and on occasion they could be linked with my painting practice. I was also conscious in their telling and construction, being desirous of a presentation that illustrated and clarified my frames and perhaps engaged others. So later, after the first burst of writing, I refine and edit them - usually a titivation, to keep them *raw* – adding further conclusions or reflections to draw fragments of them into my inquiry.

It means that, as they combine reflexive and reflective practice, they support the exploratory frame of my inquiry. But, as they are individual pieces, stemming from issues emerging from my inquiry - originating *awarefully* not *intently*, I did not find patterns across them. Generally, I use them in the question chapters of my thesis, to illustrate how my thinking on flourishing in the workplace was developing, and in the conclusions, to demonstrate where my understanding is underpinned by my inquiry. I've endeavoured to express what the *vignettes* were telling me by connecting them to the wider thesis narrative, with those not fully shown, but quoted, listed in Annex 2.1.

Painting and images

In 2010, Dr Chris Seeley introduced to my Masters class the idea of an *extended epistemology* and *many ways of knowing*. Her half-day session focused on a number of presentational drawing exercises that engaged me. Indeed, she observes fairly that:

'Whilst there are examples of researchers using presentational knowing within particular projects ..., there is great scope for presentational knowing and action research to be more strongly related in the everyday practices of action research.' (Seeley, 2011, p.84, my emphasis)

While the two inquiry practices explained above extend epistemology by tapping into a combination of thought and experience they are still largely written or word based. So, as I was finding that I couldn't really *get behind* some of the issues I was covering, by recalling Dr Seeley's workshop, I looked to use

⁴⁹ Linked to Parfitt's arguments around psychological continuity (1987, p.219-243), and something I realised through *Vignette 12: Live Time*, Annex 2.1.

⁵⁰ Echoes of Heraclitus's river.

drawing or expressive painting (presentational knowing) as a research practice. So that I might find a way of exploring differently my inquiry questions and my client work.

My appreciation of this inquiry approach has developed and deepened over time, becoming an important element in developing my understanding of my workplace flourishing. Certainly, I have found that my paintings have allowed me to *get into* a subject or to bring out some additional or hidden aspects that language alone could not convey. My experience is echoed by others: ‘...*the role presentational knowing has in bringing forth imagination and intuition – surprising visions...*’ (Seeley, 2011, p.87); and ‘... *presentational knowledge ... reveals the underlying pattern of things*’ (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014, p.32). Thus, it is necessary to say something of how I go about them and their influence on my inquiry.

Early on, when I felt there was something I couldn’t quite express or pin down about a certain inquiry issue, I would explore it by making a painting. Such as, when considering the potential facets and content of my *PPP Motif*. Later, as I considered my experiences in the client cases, I also tried to further explore my impressions through an image. You will find both sorts peppered throughout this thesis, where I introduce them alongside a related issue or event and endeavour to express their implications towards my inquiry.

Usually I take inspiration for an image from my musings or some related image that suggests itself to me, then I try to paint a more resonant representation. For example, the image of the *lonely chair* below (*Figure 2.7.*) relates to the work with my client SATURN and their onboarding difficulties. After a meeting with them I was walking through a market square past a café where all the chairs were chained together except one. I had the impression of the new hires being this lonely chair; the person left-out, never quite part of them. It denoted the lack of relatedness in the organisation and an angle that I should attend to.

Figure 2.7: Sample paintings



I paint away from my desk, I suppose needing to separate myself from my *ordering* space and into a more reflective one. Some paintings were done with Apollonian intent, such as those around *PPP*, to directly explore an idea. Others were more opportune, in particular those sprouting from my case work experiences. My ideas coming from work sessions (perhaps I make a doodle in a meeting) or from suggestions I take in my walks (the pawn comes from the chess sets I saw in a souvenir shop). For example, those I painted of JUPITER (see Section 3.2.) were completed on my hotel room floor, only hours after I connected an image to an experience.

Before starting to paint I consider my feelings and what I, at least initially, am trying to convey. And then I start to sketch first the main idea, then, adapting as I go, making changes and additions. Next, I add colour, suggesting emotion and so what colour I choose is important. Indeed, I am rather exploring as I paint and, akin to free fall writing, I try to follow the feelings I have. Usually, as I am finalising them, I make short notes around the edge in fine pencil to capture my thoughts and impressions.

These notes, coupled to the image, help to bring together new ideas or clarify aspects of my thinking. I've supposed that this approach links the experience of painting, its presentational aspects, with the propositional. From making them and by considering what they imply I have sensed a unique inquiry quality. Qualities that allow me to scrutinize and explore my feelings about an issue that I would find almost impossible to do so by writing alone. They capture, in their execution and their expression, the emergence in my inquiry and the potential for change through action.

Bringing painting into the 'live' case studies, making pictures almost real-time in my work, and reflecting side-by-side on the inquiry issues, I developed an affinity for this approach. Not only as a personal reflection method, '*...creating transformational spaces for ourselves and others...*' (Seeley, 2011, p.97) but also as a potent work practice (some were informally shared with my clients), as: '*It expands the territory of organisational responsibility to include questioning, exploring and making transparent deeper issues of purpose*' (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014, p.17).

Indeed, I suppose they are useful for articulating my ideas to others too and I consider how images might be used to more effectively express my ideas further. To make them more memorable or actionable than standard texts, alive in the minds of others as they make workplace decisions or strive to flourish themselves. I also note the difference between the *cool* diagrams I have used to clarify and my more expressive paintings. Both are helpful, but in different ways. With my paintings showing more fluidity, movement, feeling, and those sensations of what work for me is about. You'll come across those shown above and several others in the various case studies later, plus a specific group of paintings in Chapter 6., that expanded my *PPP* motif.

The resulting images had this potency to uncover important angles for me and to perhaps understand something more completely. What I see as 'painting myself out of a corner'. Indeed, by bringing my painting into the case studies, constructing images almost real-time during my work, linking into my vignettes, and reflecting side-by-side with the inquiry issues, they illuminated much of my personal positions for myself. I have noted that they resonate with others too and I wonder now how to tap into this. To explore how I might avoid the written form and explain my ideas on workplace flourishing through images alone; images that fix in the mind.

I'm not the first and certainly won't be the last person to notice that moving helps me think. Over the inquiry I've come to realise that walks or slow bike rides (there's no Lycra involved here) are an integral part of how I reflect on and develop my ideas. Frédérick Gros, in his book *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014), covers the many writers, thinkers and artists that have noted where walking was an aid to thinking. I've come to recognise – perhaps *re-find* – this **necessary part of my own reflection and processing**; as Geoff Nicholson mentions in *The Lost Art of Walking*: '*It was something I'd worked out some time ago, then managed to forget. The truth is, the real reason I walk is because I have to. I walk because it keeps me sane*' (2011, p.38).

From childhood, walking the two miles from school to home, I recall, *en-route*, working through the day (yep introvert); and I can feel the cool dampness, all those *cabbagey*-smelling dock leaves and fearsome nettles, in the tree-cocooned path alongside the Oakdene Allotments. And when I moved to London how I used to walk miles and miles, joining up the dots of the tube stations, thinking things through or ruminating on the life of the city. Budapest, Venice, Rome, Brussels, and now Geneva have all succumbed to the same dissection.

I've realised how on several occasions when I was frustrated at a particular problem that I either cycled along the nearby lake or walked through town looking to move the *impasse*. It is hard to show this practice in my thesis, but Nicholson connects walking to thought beautifully:

...I've always found walking to be inspiring. When I need to solve a problem that's arisen in something I'm writing ... then going for a walk will usually clarify matters. The pace of words is the pace of walking, and the pace of walking is also the pace of thinking.' (2011, p.262)

As a walker, or dawdling cyclist, I wouldn't label myself in terms of the *psychogeographer*⁵¹, all much too serious, perhaps maybe more the *flâneur*⁵². I talk to myself while walking - usually in my head, though too often out loud to the curiosity of others – and observe my surroundings, in an intrigued yet detached way. I cycle my thoughts through what feels, if not random, a less constrained less-linear manner. I agree with Gros when he expounds: '*Others think we are wandering aimlessly, when really it's a matter of following the idea, the idea that pulls, that carries us forward. Words come to the lips; we talk as we walk*' (2014, p.151). To me **walking-talking-thinking is like free-fall writing in motion, thus**

⁵¹ An urban walker; coined by Guy Dubord in 1955.

⁵² Essentially an urban stroller/loafer; described by Charles Baudelaire in 1864.

more akin to experience and performance as a way of knowing. It's sub-propositional, I only carry what is in my head.

I tend to value it more when I feel particularly stuck; unfolding my beloved Brompton, pocketed notebook, and glide along. I've done this often, with varying distances and durations, and with increasing awareness how this practice is allied to my sense-making. I drew comfort from an online article that synthesised the core aspects of a good, thought provoking, reflective walk, as I have tended to follow these instinctively: *'Walk further and with no fixed route; Stop texting and mapping; Don't soundtrack your walks; Go alone; Find walkable places; Walk mindfully'* (Rohrer, 2014).

Additionally, I noted a, rather-positivistic, study on walking and creativity by researchers at Stanford University concluded that walking enhances creativity, and:

'The effect is not simply due to the increased perceptual stimulation of moving through an environment, but rather it is due to walking. ...walking improves the generation of novel yet appropriate ideas, and the effect even extends to when people sit down to do their creative work shortly after.' (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014, p.1)

Their findings seemingly lend further credence to the underestimated *Art of Walking*, and I began to wonder whether this solo-practice might also be valuable in a group inquiry or research setting; several of my *Peer* discussions were done on the hoof. Indeed *'Peripatein is a Greek⁵³ verb meaning 'to walk', but it also has the meaning 'to converse', 'to engage in dialogue while walking'* (Gros, 2014, p.130).

Whatever, **perambulation is a vital element in my reflection, which I've also understood is a contemplative adjunct to my flourishing.** A last resonant word from Nicholson also connects this within the Dionysian-aspects of my research approach:

'Walking, like reading, like researching, can never be completely aimless. There may be no predetermined goal but you have to choose one path rather than another, you take your bearings from time to time, you're inevitably heading somewhere whether you know it or not: sooner or later serendipity takes over.' (2011, p.168-9)

2.2.2.2. – Into and out from literature

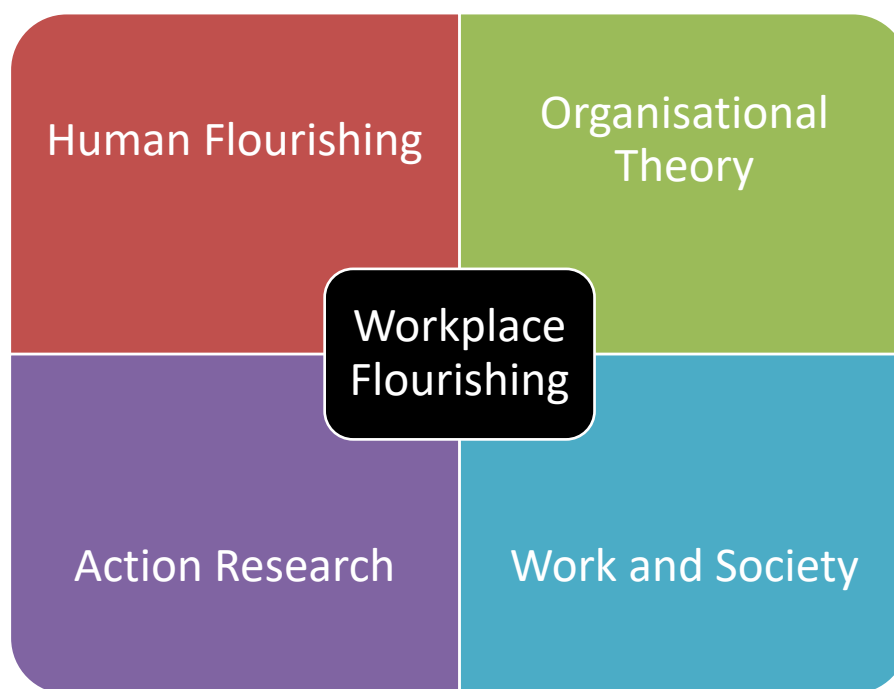
Such a broad topic, and my *Apollonian/expert-side*, rather guaranteed my need to review a wide literary canvas. I reviewed a variety of literature and theory in a fairly conventional way as: groundings for my

⁵³ Sorry those Greeks again...

inquiry, ideas to reflect on, and inspirational examples. I wanted to tap into wider traditions and to underpin those parts of my thesis that I felt required connection to theory.

Broadly, the relevant topics I have covered can be clustered into four fields that, as I see it, provide inputs or orientation towards workplace flourishing. They are: **Human Flourishing, Organisational Theory, Action Research, and Work and Society issues**. Within each of these fields there are a variety of sources that have influenced this thesis.

Figure 2.8: Placing workplace flourishing



Those subjects that connect under **Human Flourishing** are vast; one recent estimate gave bookseller Amazon holding 14,700 titles on happiness alone (Beard, 2015, p.130). Indeed, there is a **web of connections between well-being, happiness, positive psychology at work** (see Ulrich, 2013, p.xviii, figure F.2) and other flourishing related literature. Sources vary from academic accounts of Neo-Aristotelian concepts of *eudaimonia*⁵⁴ (e.g. Rasmussen, 1999) to popular pieces, such as Seligman's *Flourish* (2011) or Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow* (2002), and I have felt it necessary to go back to some of the *origin pieces* myself (Aristotle, Plato, Seneca).

⁵⁴ The Greek for human flourishing, covered in Chapter 3.

Navigating within this *milieu*, my focus on *work aspects* helped to narrow some of the reading; notably via the New Economics Foundation's (NEF) review of workplace well-being sources. Ultimately, I began to see patterns between the different genres and the issues they covered. Although I didn't follow the positive psychology strand very far, within the happiness related literature, the works of Dolan (2014), Haybron (2013), and O'Toole (2005) stand out with their strong connections to work. Covering the well-being literature (Huppert, with others, (2009, 2013, 2014) and Hone (2014) in particular) helped me to **construct a language around flourishing that I was struggling with and in conceiving what flourishing might entail for myself** (notably Diener, with others, (1985, 2010) and Keyes (2002, 2005)). I give an account of them at the beginning of Chapter 3., as it shows how I was looking to conventionally situate my inquiry.

Organisational Theory includes those subjects that are related to my OD-practice field. At the beginning, when I tried to connect flourishing with work issues, I **noted clear associations with work motivation and needs**. Leaning heavily on Maslow's *Theory of Human Motivation* (2013) and Ryan and Deci's *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations* (2000). **Looking at workplace practices from human-centred angles** also helped me in divining various principle and practice issues. Notably: MacGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* (2006), Stewart's *Happy Manifesto* (2013), Amabile and Kramer's *The Progress Principle* (2011), Notter and Grant's *Humanize* (2012), Goffee and Jones's *Why should anyone work here?* (2015), Lips-Wiersma and Morris's *The Map of Meaning: A guide to sustaining humanity in the world of work* (2011), and Cable's *Alive at work* (2018). All covered in Chapter 5.

When considering my own organisational development practice, see Crăciun *et al.*, *Organisational Viability Toolkit* (2009) and Lewinsky and Muharemovic's *CSO Management: Practical tools for organisational development analysis* (2011), I saw how it connected to **action research practices and the importance of space for dialogue**. Various elements of organisational development and capacity building work (Cheung-Judge and Holbeche's *Organization Development: A practitioner's guide for OD and HR* (2011) and James's *Demystifying Organisation Development* (1998) in particular) and organisational theories (notably Laloux, *Reinventing Organisations*, 2014) brought in further professional groundings. Specific organisational issues were identified when I looked to see **where organisational and flourishing practices might connect**, such as organisational structure/forms, change management, culture and values, performance management, compensation, and leadership and governance (also Chapter 5.).

Action Research and inquiry presented the third major field and required a **review of inquiry methods (clinical Inquiry, self-reflective inquiry, extended epistemology, validity and ethics)**. Much of which is covered in this and the previous chapter. It led to the placement of my inquiry as AR, and my **understanding of the emerging, constructivist nature of it**. Indeed, as I found their explanations close to my own experience, the works that connect research and work practice (i.e., Stacey and Griffin's *A Complexity Perspective on Researching Organizations* (2005) and Shaw's *Changing Conversations* (2002)) were especially formative in framing my research approach.

The fourth quadrant, **Work and Society**, is more nebulous, as I focused on higher-level issues related to the **meaning of work in society and the politics of social development**. Aspects of work-life meaning (notably Arendt's *Labor, Work, Action* (2000) gave key leads to the *how* of flourishing, see Annex 4.3., and the works of Deranty and Dejours), labour and working rights were reviewed (various ILO titles), alongside issues of human development (i.e., Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach in Alexander (2008), and Max-Neef's fundamental human needs in *Human Scale Development* (1991)). A second core focus was on **civil society theory**, and in particular NGO development; where sources such as Gellner's *Conditions of Liberty* (1996) and Roper and Pettit's *Development and the Learning Organisation* (2002) grounded my ideas within the field.

Ultimately, from my review, I believe that my thesis is primarily **sited in the organisational development arena, notably towards personal and organisational practices for human-focused organisations**. I'm certainly not looking to offer existential concepts of flourishing or add to the measures of well-being. Furthermore, as my ideas about workplace flourishing is situated within my desire for positive change it has potential socio-political dimensions.

2.3. – Grounding validity and claim

That Bradbury and Reason chose to conclude the *Handbook on Action Research* (2006) with a discussion on the validity of action research is perhaps telling. Indeed, Reason and Torbert state:

'... examples of first-person research/practice raise the question, how can we differentiate between better (more valid) and worse (less valid) work in this domain? ...the primary questions

about validity concern ways in which research/practitioners test the reach of their subjectivity in the midst of their research/practice.’ (2001, p.20)

Research validity is a subject in itself and Bradbury and Reason’s question ‘...am I doing good work’ (2006, p.343) did sit at the back of my mind. I wondered whether my emerging inquiry, with its eclectic mix of research methods, linked to the five dimensions of AR (see Sub-section 2.1.2.), could be seen as good, qualitative research. A particular text rattled me, warning against: ‘pedantic’, ‘populist’ or ‘puerile’ research (Linley, Harrington, & Garcia, 2013, p.5) and I had an apprehension that my research approach was potentially otiose. How could my personal stories or paintings be credible for others?

Much of the work on validity presented here was generated via a co-inquiry with Christiane, a fellow student (and who appears later in Chapter 6), where we exchanged views, writing and ideas. But something was going on that caused us to work together on this specific issue, something we didn’t voice. I now see how we were holding hands and stepping together into the unknown, unfamiliar aspects of our research. We had both ‘gone out’ with other ways of knowing and were trying to cope with the different ‘data’ we had gathered from our experiential and presentational inquiry practices. Hiding our fears, by projecting our doubts. I now see how we both lurched back onto familiar territory, so that, by building a theoretical background, we could, in concert, comfort one another and trust what our research was telling us. From suspending disbelief, to building belief. Now I realise the crossover from this questioning of credibility to my sense of flourishing overall; as I still question whether I can flourish if my work has no validity, purpose or meaning.

Importantly, it was within the questioning of the validity of my various approaches that my pragmatic-constructivism, knowledge creation positions (Sub-section 1.3.2.), and overall research approach (Sub-section 2.1.3.) qualms were resolved. *How I came to believe, what I believe I know.* However, as it perhaps determines whether as my reader you will give credence to my exploration’s outcomes, it is worth dwelling a little on this before moving into the question-based chapters. There are two interconnected parts to this: first, where I situated my approach with theories of qualitative research validity, and, secondly, from that, the three *validity areas* I adopted for my thesis. Let’s take a look.

Golafshani has opined that: ‘*Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology*’ (2003, p.598). Indeed, there are questions about whether ‘*having standards of criteria of validity*’ (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p.343) within a constructivist position is relevant at all.⁵⁵ That aside, I felt my

⁵⁵ Indeed, I would consider a few of the *positivistic* research papers I have consulted during this inquiry to lie in the realm of the *scientistic*: ‘...that is, it lays false claim to scientific rigour and authority’ (Foster, 2008, p.19).

thesis, one evolving from a first-person, reflective approach, required an array of validities linked to its emergent, constructivist characteristics. Noting that Patti Lather indicates a move from:

'...the search for uniform criteria toward criteria that emerge as a natural consequence of the inquiry effort' and leads to '...a call for a profusion of situated validities, immanent validities, within the context of a particular inquiry.' (Lather, 2007, p.5,172, my emphasis)

Indeed, Golafshani (2003) dissects the usual ideas of reliability and validity, calling them *inadequate* (p.600), and proposes that qualitative research has to reframe them. In their place he introduces the terms of *trustworthiness, credibility, quality* and *transferability* (p.604), suggesting that the demonstration of rigour in qualitative research should be the depth of *'...subjectivity, reflexivity, and the social interaction...'* (p.602) exhibited in the research. He brings these together under one term: *credibility* (p.600), which resonates with Heron's view of *'...well-groundedness, soundness, having an adequate warrant'* (1996, p.57).

Of course, what is credible enough remains a question. However, Lather, in her 1986 paper *Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research: Between a Rock and a Soft Place*, makes a useful critique of different research pieces and gives a minimum of aspects to be built into our research designs (1986, p.77-78). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba summarise, in *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985), appropriate techniques to establish trustworthiness. I considered three different *typologies* of qualitative inquiry (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p.344-350; Creswell & Miller, 2000; and Cho & Trent, 2006) to try to distil those appropriate validities that connected with my thesis's context.

Bradbury and Reason, link five issues, which emerge from the participatory worldview inherent in the action research paradigm, to eight choice-points.⁵⁶ For me, Bradbury and Reason's typology essentially meant that **my inquiry's validity can be found across the *approaches, products, and reasons of my research***. In other words, asserting my thesis's validity relies on choices that match its aspirations and claims, and it is important to reveal them.

Creswell and Miller follow this, as they: *'...suggest that the choice of validity procedures is governed by two perspectives: the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and researchers' paradigm assumptions'* (2000, p.124, my emphasis). The axes of their framework have three *lenses* and three *paradigms*; which they discuss in detail. The validation lenses are self-explanatory and I can *buy them*

⁵⁶ In summary validity is found in the: quality of the participatory-relationship, practical outcomes, extended epistemology, inquiry purpose, and, developmental quality or enduring consequence.

(they also seem to echo into Lather's four frames in writing, see later), but the paradigms they put forward are perhaps less obvious. So, while taken by their approach, finding merit across all the validity procedures presented, I questioned whether their procedures were mutually exclusive of one another.

The third typology, from Cho and Trent (2006), assesses qualitative research validity from a rather different stance, that of splitting them into either *transactional* or *transformational* approaches, and then offering what they call a *holistic approach* to determine appropriate validation means. They say that '*In transactional approaches, validity of the text/account is of primary importance*' (p.322), while *transformational* effectively links validity to the purpose, where '*[v]alidity is determined by the resultant actions prompted by the research endeavour*' (p.324).⁵⁷ Which, could be characterised as a *proof-of-the-pudding* validity.

Importantly, Cho and Trent concede the potential for ambiguity and they see the **matching of research approaches and validity as fairly free-form**; referring to a '*bricolage of validity approaches*' (2006, p.333). This was emancipating, as I believe that my thesis's approach and purpose sits across these typologies. Subsequently, I surmised that **the validity/credibility of my inquiry is characterised by being authentic to the subject matter**. But the question remained, how to proceed in providing credibility or trustworthiness? In my case for an inquiry with an exploratory and emerging approach that relies on a constructivist and reflective stance to create knowledge. Knowledge that should ultimately connect to the inquiry's purposes and provide practical outcomes.

So, pragmatically, I rather **adopted the '...concern for engagement, dialogues, pragmatic outcomes and emergent, reflexive sense of what is important'** (Bradbury & Reason 2006, p.343) as a basis for credibility in my thesis. Placing my attention on these across three areas: in my research practice, in communicating the work ('*letting the readers "see" for themselves*' (Cho & Trent, 2006, p.334)), and in divining the outcomes. I consider each in turn:

1). Research Practice: The core method of my research lies in the personal reflections of past and present experiences, the work I did with my clients, and the discussions with my peers. Within them there are many *conversations* – either internal or shared - that form the layers of my exploration. Thus, '*...the nature of the discourse become[s] essential*' (Kvale, 1995, p.31). From my **constructivist paradigm**,

⁵⁷ Their five main purposes of transformational qualitative research are: 'Truth' seeking, Thick description, Developmental, Personal essay, and Praxis/Social Change.

conversations and dialogue are essentially where meaning is being developed and so I required an ability to respond to and reflect on these inner and outer conversations.

I connect with Stacey and Griffin (2005), who point to the two senses of reflexivity required when experience is the key research medium and the relationship between the researcher and others is crucial. They denote them as *self-reflection* and *social-reflexivity* (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p.10).

In credibility terms, this has required of me to hold, and exhibit (one that can let others in), a **self-reflexive approach to my various experiences and interactions**. This is tricky when realising that *'...there are few guidelines for how one goes about the doing of it'* (reflexivity) and there are *'...limits of self-reflexivity'* (Lather, 1993, p.685). Indeed, utilising personal reflection was a challenge for my research (inferred by Judi Marshall's assertion of living *'life as an inquiry'* (Marshall, 1999, p.2; Marshall 2001, p.245)) in that *'...[t]he practice of first-person inquiry is an ongoing life-practice which can take place at the very moment of acting (on-line reflection) or at later point (off-line reflection)'* (Reason & McArdle, 2008, p.10). Indeed, I identified how my:

'...inquiry is a continuing unfolding process. As one theme becomes emptied of energy or develops more of a habitual format of inquiry..., other waves emerge to take its place as fresh edges of questioning. Sometimes engaging with them precedes an appropriate labelling and it takes a while to recognise what is at heart in the inquiry. Sometimes an appropriate phrase acts as an organising schema that then directs attention.' (Marshall, 1999, p.171)

The ideas, understandings and learnings that comprise the knowledge I claim have developed from a composite of influences coming from my explorations. Reading, remembering, talking, and thinking, together connect within the constructivist process of change mentioned above (something I return to in Section 6.1.). This represents my personal process of sense-making, coming through a prolonged period and based on various inquiry locations and methods. I hope to have avoided equivocation, though it was sometimes difficult to always capture where an idea came or how a position was garnered (you'd have to come on my walks with me).

Despite this, as Bradbury and Lichtenstein say: *'...in research all data is mediated by the Self. Thus, attention should be placed on the individual-level processes through which data is collected'* (2000, p.559). By describing my research approach above I've attempted at least to **name my individual-level processes; where my inquiries dwelled**. It is there where I **explored my own experiences** (such as via my paintings or *vignettes*), **reflect on them, and open them up to others**, hopefully lending credence to my tale.

The shared conversations with the *Peers* were perhaps easier to capture; as I had to myself. The open nature of these dialogues themselves was important, as we talked our ideas developed and blended together, with a ‘...free and creative exploration of complex and subtle issues...’ (Senge, 1990, p.220). I noticed, sometimes in the framing I did or in the reactions I had to the points that were made how my own experiences became crystallised. In addition, I could better connect to the literature sources from the context given through our shared experiences and stories.

Indeed, this mention of literature raises how I have included others’ theories into my inquiries. To ground my work, I have covered in detail my assessments of some related fields. Finding sustenance from a number of key authors for my developing views. There have been many “*a-ha!*” moments, where a text has helped to deepen or clarify my understanding. Fundamentally though, while some may find my use of them too conventional, these sources rather provided prompts, influences, and opinions that helped me to reveal new ideas, build concepts, and consider possible linkages. Certainly, when there was resonance with my own conclusions, it helped to build my belief that my inquiry had merit.

2). Research Presentation: John Heron questioned the accepted role of the research report, leaning toward the primacy of the practical (1996, p.35). However, this written thesis, the presentational form, remains a traditional validity tool. Stacey and Griffin say legitimate written accounts:

‘...must make sense to others, resonate with the experiences of others and be persuasive to them. Furthermore, it must be justifiable in terms of a wider tradition of thought that the community being addressed finds persuasive, or at least plausible. The value of this kind of research, we would claim, is that it presents accounts of what people actually experience in their organizational practice with all its uncertainty, emotion and messiness, rather than highly rational, decontextualized accounts and their hindsight view.’ (2005, p.27)

I’ve aspired to such an account of my work and experiences, connecting them to wider literature and theory, but keeping it alive. Admittedly this was difficult (Etherington, 2004, p.23), where the emergent nature of my knowledge creation, being usually non-linear or incremental, meant that it might sometimes be indistinct. So, my approach was to **fashion my presentation in ways that are held by Lather’s four validity tests for texts:**⁵⁸

‘...social scientists committed to conducting, reporting, and encouraging first-person research/practice develop situated validity, rhizomatic validity, reflexive validity, and ironic

⁵⁸ In *Fertile Obsession: Validity after Poststructuralism* (1993), Lather presents these four frames for validity differently: 1). Validity as simulacra/ironic validity, 2). Lyotardian paralogy/neo-pragmatic validity, 3). Derridean rigour/rhizomatic validity, and 4). Voluptuous validity/situated validity. Tags influenced by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida.

validity. Situated validity is raised when a text includes not just a disembodied voice, but an embodied, emotional, reflective voice. Rhizomatic validity is raised when a text presents multiple voices defining the situation differently. Reflexive validity is raised when a text attempts to challenge its own validity claims. Ironical validity is raised by inviting further interpretation by readers.' (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p.27, my emphasis)

Her tests served as a *blueprint* to develop, and as a *benchmark* to assess, the written expression of my research. You might appreciate how the *Tale of Two Sisters* was written with these tests in mind; as are similar sections throughout. I also tried to integrate my different inquiry practices with one another. For example, in an attempt to *open-up* my inner conversations, the JUPITER case study includes and connects personal reflections of my musing and painting to the ongoing experience, and adds my take on some theory (Section 3.2.).

Thus, I **strove to bring out the story and conversations for my reader, reference them to my inquiry approaches, showing how my exploration developed knowledge from them, and present an ironic, reflective, voice as I go.** If others find resonance with my conclusions from this telling then I've supposed there is merit in it; although my success here sits with you as the reader.

3). Research Purpose: From the different typologies above, I believe that it is in the purposes of the research and its eventual effect where the ultimate measure of my inquiry's validity lies (again, as you will discover later, having a connection with my own flourishing). Steinar Kvale describes this as *pragmatic validity*, with its connection to the results and application of them, by saying: '*Within social sciences, action research goes beyond descriptions of social conditions to include actions to change the very conditions investigated*' (1995, p.33).

As a civil society activist this position is attractive to me and I see this as a stronger proof of claim than '*mere agreement through a dialogue*' (Kvale, 1995, p.33). For surely action research is ultimately based on this practical presumption (Heron, 1996, p.35). It has meant that this **essential basis for validity was served by being mindful and revealing of attainment of my overall purposes** (see Section 1.4.).

Especially, the transformation of me, my practice, and my sense of flourishing through it, and those organisational implications I strove to highlight through my cases that led to new ways of thinking about organisational life. In the final chapter, I revisit my inquiry's purposes and aims to weigh the claims made and test their validity.

Chapter 3. – What is *Human Flourishing*?

Socrates: ‘...*the really important thing is not to live, but to live well.*’ (Plato, 1969, p.87)

The term *human flourishing* is rather curious, it’s certainly not mine and to be honest I find it cumbersome; people go blank when I’ve used it. But, as I’ve explained above, it became a rather *convenient label* to explain what I thought I was striving for from my work-life. So, as the conceptual basis to my inquiry, I felt compelled to work through what it seemingly signifies to myself and others.

The first time I registered the phrase was through the action research field and the writing of John Heron and Peter Reason: ‘*Human flourishing is intrinsically worthwhile: it is valuable as an end in itself*’ (Heron, 1996, p.11). Indeed, Reason and Bradbury uphold that action research is a *practice* towards human flourishing, specifically including human flourishing among the five dimensions of action research (‘...*the flourishing of individual persons and their communities*’ (2001, p.1)). Although originally, I must admit it appeared rather obtuse and remote from my experience of action research.

I also came across others referring to human flourishing and ‘*life-meaning*’ (Foster, 2008, p.88-96), which made me more inquisitive.⁵⁹ So, without fully comprehending what the term might denote, I latched onto it and **connected it with my thinking on what comprised my nascent PPP work-motif**. And, while never wishing to propose some general definition, looking into it evolved into this thesis.

My two daughters, in their curiosity, have inquired “*Dad what’s this flourishing all about anyway?*”, or asked whether I’ve “*flourished today?*” Thus, inadvertently raising those issues that comprise this chapter: what does this concept of flourishing mean to me (and perhaps others) and can I distinguish what might contribute to my sense of flourishing through my work?

⁵⁹ Foster extends his search for a powerful driver for achieving sustainability by tapping into concepts of human flourishing (2008, p.79).

3.1. – The concept of human flourishing

‘...the happy man lives well and fares well; for we have practically defined happiness as a sort of living and faring well.’ (Aristotle, 2009, p.13)

Initially I started framing my inquiry without getting into literature and theory, but there was a moment when I felt I needed to *pin down* the term human flourishing (Apollo bites). Yet there are a daunting number of takes on it, within a wealth of connected concepts; including: happiness, well-being⁶⁰, positive psychology⁶¹, or *flow*. However, to have a basis for and to gain supporting ideas for workplace flourishing, I felt it necessary to delve into them. I did so by covering a variety of sources, particular where others looked to connect with work.

I present this now as, while giving perhaps a conventional review, the ideas and issues that came from it were integral to my ongoing reflections. Supporting my inquiry by providing context from a broad field and suggesting different angles. It means this section is a little theory heavy, but it hopefully gives to you, as it did for me, something of the flavour of the key issues around flourishing. Showing later how they connect with my own evolving positions.

I’ve noticed how this discussion on human flourishing could be helped and grounded through presenting my own tale; showing a time when I felt I was flourishing myself. I now recall a period that somewhat typifies when I was flourishing. I have a photograph of me, aged thirty, in the Egyptian desert. I am tanned, with collar-length hair, sunglasses, and equipped for the desert. I was recently married, had just been promoted into an interesting and challenging post, and am seemingly confident and ready to go ahead. I feel good about this image of myself, even though I know the future that lies for this earlier version of me. It was a time when I really started to build who I am and what I believe through my work. Indeed, the nascent beginning of this inquiry too. It is odd that I found myself reluctant to explore it. Partly, I think, I was unwilling to try to express my own experiences upfront, as

⁶⁰ There are both objective and subjective versions of wellbeing: ‘Objective wellbeing refers to wellbeing at the societal level: the objective facts of people’s lives; this contrasts with subjective wellbeing, which concerns how people actually experience their lives’ (Huppert, 2014, p.2). The constructivist bent of my inquiry naturally favours the subjective form.

⁶¹ Positive Psychology, the discipline of psychology that explores ‘...what makes life worth living and building the enabling conditions of a life worth living’ (Seligman, 2011, p.1-2).

initially I wanted to keep my position open, but funny when I think this is what I am searching for. I wonder, am I also worried that it might sound flat, mundane, or somehow contained? Or shying away, fearful of my own projection of something that perhaps never was, and might never be.

Unsurprisingly human flourishing, being a very old topic with a wide tradition, is a convoluted and complex concept. Younkens writes:

‘The question of what leads to or makes up a flourishing and happy human life has been debated throughout the entire history of political and moral philosophy and, more recently in the social sciences such as economics and positive psychology.’ (2010, p.1)

The term itself is used as an appropriate English expression for the Greek word *eudaimonia*

(Rasmussen, 1999, p.1-2)⁶², and most authors refer to the classical Greek philosophers for the conceptual origins of human flourishing and their inquiries into it as ***the highest human good*** (Brown, 2009, p.x). Working from them (see Aristotle above), I initially followed Brown (1993, p.859, see glossary) as an initial meaning, then connected my understanding of the term with others: *‘The experience of life going well involves both feeling good and functioning well’* (Huppert, 2014, p.1, my emphasis). I thought *‘all well and good, I can relate to this’*, but, my exploration here rather meant **examining for myself what underlies the concept of human flourishing, how it connects with my work-life, and whether I could formulate a notion of *Workplace Flourishing***. A review of what others had done in related fields was one place to start.

First, I wanted to fathom the nomenclature being used around the subject, which may also be useful for readers as my thesis evolves. Indeed, confusingly, within well-being studies *eudaimonic* is now usually used to denote **positive functioning**, and *hedonic* being connected to sensations of pleasure and happiness, or **feeling good**: *‘The major division is between hedonic views of wellbeing as pleasant feelings and evaluations, versus eudaimonic views which suggest that wellbeing involves engaging in behavior that is self-actualizing, meaningful, and growth producing’* (Fisher, 2014, p.10).⁶³ This is worth keeping in mind as *hedonic* and *eudaimonic* are widely used when talking about elements of flourishing/well-being. Though not by everyone with exactly the same sense and this convoluted

⁶² From the Aristotelian notion of *eudaimonia*, covered in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, human flourishing has replaced the traditional equivalence with happiness; although *fulfillment* is also proposed (Aristotle, 2009, p.x).

⁶³ Ryff & Keyes (1995, p.719) attribute it to *‘Waterman’s (1993) distinction between eudaimonic and hedonic conceptions of happiness...’*

terminology warned me of the coming intricacies used to determine various well-being concepts' elements.

I looked in detail at well-being research, as they propound that **when we exhibit high-levels of subjective well-being (SWB) we are said to be flourishing**.⁶⁴ Also, as *'The dedicated study of flourishing requires an accepted definition and good quality scales by which to measure it'* (Huppert & So, 2013, p.838), **how they claim to have managed the difficult task of divining a measure of flourishing** - from the conceptual to the operational - was naturally enticing for me. In other words: what do they think it comprises so that they can measure it?

Perhaps inevitably the field is currently rather haphazard (Huppert & So, 2013, p.840), because: *'Although various definitions and scales exist, deriving from a variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives ..., there is no current agreement on which should be used in research, or to inform policy'* (2013, p.838). Additionally, many conceptions have originated from mental health diagnostics offering a particular slant.⁶⁵ Still, without digressing into a complete analysis, I had wanted to explore what was out there and to gain an impression of the origins, content, vocabulary, and flavour of various well-being measures.⁶⁶

Drawing from the Scales/Measures

For this I drew largely from reviews of the various scales or measures of flourishing/well-being; notably: Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, and Biswas-Diener (2010); Hone, Jarden, Schofield, and Duncan (2014); and Huppert and So (2009; 2013). Naturally the discussions are quite involved so, as I take you through them, a word of warning.

At first the sheer number of approaches and elements was confusing. For example, Ryff and Keyes, in *Theory-Guided Dimensions of Well-Being*, 1995, define six categories that propose what a flourishing person should possess: *Self-Acceptance, Positive Relations with Others, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Purpose in Life, and Personal Growth*. While, Huppert and So (2013, p.837) present a similar list of ten different *'features of positive well-being'*, as: *'competence, emotional stability, engagement,*

⁶⁴ *'...subjective well-being is defined as people's evaluations of their lives...'* (Diener et. al., 2009, p.251).

⁶⁵ Fortunately, Keyes brings some clarity here: *'Mental health is conceived of as a complete state in which individuals are free of psychopathology and flourishing with high levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being'* (2005, p.539).

⁶⁶ There are related commercial offers, such as: Dream Company Diagnostic, Barrett Values Centre, Robertson Cooper, and Great Place to Work.

meaning, optimism, positive emotion, positive relationships, resilience, self esteem, and vitality.' And Keyes opines that there are: '*...as many as 13 symptoms (i.e., measures) ... that..., represent either the latent structure of hedonic well-being or eudaimonic well-being*' (2005, p.540). These provided useful words and phrases, but they bobbled around in my mind as I tried to work out what they meant for me. All measures are based on *self-report*, thus subjective, and, for most scales, if a person's score is high (depending on various statistical cut-off points) they are characterised as flourishing and if low they are characterised as languishing.⁶⁷

Diener *et al.*, (2010) assessed a number of SWB measures in comparison to a refinement of their own proposed sets of scales.⁶⁸ Their approach originates from a mental health diagnostic root, but I noted gained additional inputs by including aspects of others: *social capital* (Putnam, Helliwell), *psychological capital* (Csikszentmihalyi), and *purpose and meaning* (Seligman). Importantly they confide how their scales were influenced by earlier humanistic psychology works, such as Ryan and Deci's **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** (2000), which: '*...suggest[s] that there are several universal human psychological needs, such as the need for competence, relatedness, and self acceptance...*' (Diener *et al.*, 2010, p.144, my emphasis).

SDT is utilised in several approaches, and **these three 'needs' resonated later** when I considered my own flourishing work experiences.⁶⁹ Notably, Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens, and Lens (2010), applied SDT within their *Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction (W-BNS)* scale for a study of *autonomy, competence, and relatedness at work*. Tantalizingly they suggest **a connection between flourishing and fundamental human needs:**

'Self-Determination Theory ... postulates three innate psychological needs, which have to be satisfied for individuals to flourish, that is, the needs for autonomy (i.e., experiencing a sense of volition and psychological freedom), competence (i.e., feeling effective), and relatedness (i.e., feeling loved and cared for).'' (Van den Broek *et. al.*, 2010, p.981)

And surmise: '*individuals are attracted to situations in which need satisfaction may occur*' (p.983) and thus '*satisfaction of the basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is considered as a*

⁶⁷ Gallup (2014) uses only one measure (the Cantril Scale) which has three characterizations: thriving, struggling and suffering; although interestingly uses twelve questions to assess employee engagement (see Gallup 2013).

⁶⁸ The *Flourishing Scale* (FS) and the *Scale of Positive and Negative Experience* (SPANE).

⁶⁹ Both the New Economics Foundation (Jeffrey, *et. al.*, 2014, p.27) and Daniel Pink's bestseller *Drive* (2011) utilise this work.

crucial condition for individuals' thriving' (p.995). In rather functional language, they present some work-related implications of this:

'...these results indicate that work-related need satisfaction versus frustration yields implications for individuals' functioning, both on the job and in general. Employees might therefore want to assess and regulate the need supportive character of their jobs and seek for environments which nourish their motivational energy and stimulate optimal functioning. Need satisfaction might be a point of interest for organizations as well, as it might be helpful in assessing and improving the motivational impact of organizational aspects such as job design.' (p.997, my emphasis)

As I cover later, based on my *Peer* discussions, there were similar needs that we raised for our work, and **autonomy**⁷⁰, **competence**, and **relatedness** appeared to connect with aspects of my *PPP Motif*.

Van Dierendonck, Diaz, Rodrigues-Carvajal, Blanco, and Moreno-Jiménez (2008, p.473) further fill in some of the origins of the field by pointing to the work done by Carol Ryff (comprising her large literature review) that covered: *'...life span theories (e.g., Erikson 1959), clinical theories on personal growth (e.g., Maslow 1968; Rogers 1961; Allport 1961) and the criteria of positive mental health formulated by Jahoda*⁷¹ *and how they complemented one another (2008, p.474). Huppert and So (2013) also give a useful historical summary of sources, and those elements devised for measuring well-being and their definitions. They note other broader approaches, such as that: '...taken by Antonovsky (1993) who equated psychological well-being with a sense of coherence, which he conceived as an enduring attitude whereby life is seen as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful'* (Huppert & So, 2013, p.838, my emphasis). This **idea of coherence** became something of a theme in my deliberations on my own flourishing (covered in Chapter 4.).

Eventually **I began to see how most scales/measures are comprised of largely similar elements, with their varying accents presenting a slightly differently cut cake**. The shortened form of the *Mental Health Continuum* (MHC-SF) (Keyes, 2009, p.1) represents what most of the broader scales attempt to measure: *Emotional* well-being, *psychological* well-being, *social* well-being, and one *quality-of-life* question (based on Cantril (1965)).

Furthermore, Keyes has written that: *'...mental health and mental illness are not opposite ends of a single continuum; rather, they constitute distinct but correlated axes that suggest that mental health should be viewed as a complete state'* (2005, p.546). Meaning that the absence of mental illness does

⁷⁰ Huppert and So have queried *'...the necessity of autonomy as an element in positive human functioning'* (2013, p.851) as it does not have a parallel in the diagnosis base used by many measures.

⁷¹ See Jahoda, 1958, p.22-63.

not equate with mental health or flourishing. To me this suggested that the common concept of flourishing denotes something beyond being mentally healthy or being well, to **representing an optimised rather than a satisfied position**: *‘Flourishing goes well beyond the idea that we merely exist or survive. It connotes that we are to live in a vigorous state; thriving, prospering.’* (Marigold Associates, 2010). It surpasses standard corporate concepts of well-being and reinforced the **aspirational ideal** I considered for flourishing through work.⁷²

Keyes also highlighted an area that was less obvious from many others, that of measuring *social well-being* and what he characterizes as: *‘The measures of social well-being [that] operationalize how much individuals see themselves thriving in their public, social life.’* (2005, p.542).⁷³ He explains further:

‘...there is more to functioning well in life than psychological well-being. ...positive functioning includes social challenges and tasks, ... Whereas psychological well-being represents more private and personal criteria for evaluation of one’s functioning, social well-being epitomizes the more public and social criteria whereby people evaluate their functioning in life.’ (2002, p.209)

I found this important and later you will see how this resonates with *Place* in my *PPP motif* and the **need for societal connectivity** (Chapter 4.).

Looking at the content of these measures helped me to name some aspects or factors that I felt might relate to workplace flourishing (the drivers). By reviewing and collating many of these approaches, adding to their *collections* with those of others (summarised in Annex 3.1.), I gained both my bearings and valuable suggestions (**overall aspirational coherence, involving autonomy, competence, and societal relatedness**). However, beyond feeling good and functioning well, I felt unclear on the difference between flourishing itself, what it might comprise, and what potentially drives it.

Considering an operative model

So, to ground my inquiry further against these related fields I sought to explore others’ conceptualisations of flourishing/well-being. I selected the New Economics Foundation’s (NEF), work-related, *Dynamic model of Well-being* (Michaelson *et al*, 2012, p.7; Abdallah *et al*, 2011, p.13).⁷⁴ Thinking

⁷² Actually, Keyes’s research has led him to opine that only around 20% of all adults (in the USA) are *flourishing*, with another 30% *languishing* and the remainder in a *moderate*, ultimately less than fulfilled, state (2002, p.218), which I found oddly resonant with the Gallup engagement survey in my introduction.

⁷³ Applied across five areas: social-acceptance, social actualization, social contribution, social coherence, and social integration.

⁷⁴ I note similarities with Huppert and So’s three-dimensional model of wellbeing/flourishing: *‘The dimensions are positive appraisal (life satisfaction), positive functioning (engagement, competence, meaning, and positive*

that, as they have applied this model for the workplace, it could provide a useful *sounding board* for the inquiries I was making. Something to refer to and reflect against with the various discussions, cases, and reading I was doing alongside these theories. It should be noted that most of this work was done later in the process, a year or so in, and not at the beginning as this positioning might imply.

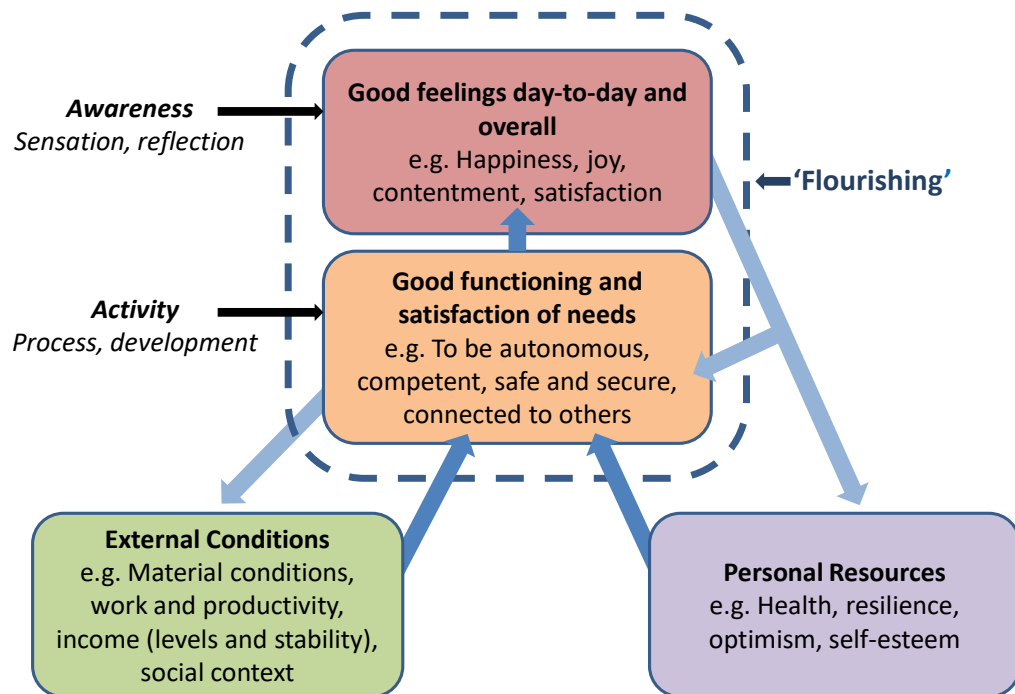
I have wondered why I went to rely on another's model to base this explanation of my exploration into what is human flourishing. Was I falling back onto the grounded propositional expert voice? Afraid that my own knowing, coming from my varied inquiry pieces, wouldn't stand up to inspection. I now understood that this is a part of my own process, feeling how I need a place to work from, which I can then spring off from with my own ideas and findings. And, while respecting the shoulders I was standing upon, I question them too as I use them. I see this as an ongoing wrangle in myself, where personal conviction tussles with an inhibiting insecurity.

This is quite an involved part of my thesis, but, as it helps to **locate many different parts of the concept of flourishing and understand what needed to be looked at in my inquiry**, it's worth staying with it. So, let's explore it together piece-by-piece.

For NEF *personal flourishing* is contained in the two top-boxes of their model (*Figure 3.1.*) and with *influences* (external and personal) shown in the lower ones. I approximate the red box (Good feelings...) with those emotional aspects of flourishing, the *hedonic* and pleasure related; the sensation of happiness. It helped to signify to me that **an evaluative sense of doing well is necessary**. Thus, awareness, both *sensation* and *reflection*, is seemingly involved.

relationships), and positive personal characteristics (emotional stability, vitality, optimism, resilience, positive emotion, and self-esteem)' (Fisher, 2014, p.13).

Figure 3.1: Adapted version of NEF's Dynamic Model of Well-being



Originally, I was rather shy of considering happiness – emotional or *hedonic* well-being - in my conception of workplace flourishing; favouring the *eudaimonic* focus that seemingly connects with work. But, certainly *feeling good* appears to be an obvious indication of how we are doing (sort of the whole point really) and needed attention (something I realised through my final work with JUPITER, see *Vignette 9*, Sub-section 6.1.1.). Indeed, I eventually comprehended that many peoples' expression of looking for work-life balance rather indicates that what they value is absent in their work. As, Haybron asserts:

"Happiness' is a central term in our everyday vocabularies, and people use it all the time to think and talk about things they care about. [But] ...we need to figure out what the important things are that people use 'happiness' to talk about." (2013, p.10)

This was useful in giving *air* between happiness as a momentary sensation and what makes me happy. Thereby, it seemed pertinent for me to **discover what are those things I really care about or make me feel good as I work and, beyond momentary happiness, to an overall evaluative dimension?**

Yet, Paul Dolan has argued that *life-satisfaction* is rarely considered by us (2014, p.4-5) and is essentially a construct (p.189). Fair enough, but I found that me and the *Peers* (you'll see in Sections 3.3., 4.2., and 4.3.) rather assessed our work-flourishing against a sense of longer-term satisfaction than that of day-to-day happiness.⁷⁵ It seemed to me that, outside momentary experiences, **my positive or negative evaluation (or reflection) of my (working-)life was defining my sense of flourishing**. I've found this to be an important realisation, that coloured much of my understanding of *how* we flourish (Chapter 4.).

Importantly, this **showed to me how act and experience and sensation and contemplation are all intimately linked**. Thus, awareness of whether I flourish must comprise of both the day-to-day sensations of experience and the longer-term contemplative evaluation of my life. These **sensation and reflective elements seemed significant** and I further explored this with my *Peers* (Section 4.3.).

I consider that NEF's orange box (Good functioning...) is broadly analogous with the *eudaimonic*, psychological well-being dimensions proposed in the well-being literature. In trying to give more context to what is contained there I contemplated Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's description of *flow* (2002).⁷⁶ Mainly, as I thought his stance, referring to mastery, challenge, participation and involvement in life (SDT-like stuff), connects with the *eudaimonic* and social aspects found in several subjective well-being measures and to what my *Peers* related of their flourishing (see 3.3., below).⁷⁷

Attractively, *flow* denotes a constant practice, with a striving and vibrancy to it; echoes of the living life as inquiry of action research practice mentioned in Chapter 2. This connection to something akin to a **life-long process (practice and development) within flourishing** later became fundamental to my notion of workplace flourishing: '*Whereas happiness evokes a state of mind, a feeling of satisfaction with oneself and one's environment, human flourishing conveys the idea of a process, of both a personal project and a goal for humanity*' (Triglav Circle, 2005). In other words, flourishing '*...consists in excellent activity: it is more something you do than a state you try to attain*', and requires '*...fully exercising your human capacities, actively pursuing a rich, full life*' (Haybron, 2013, p.83). Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi goes on to link flow practices with meaning-making beyond daily practices:

⁷⁵ Illustratively: Denmark is the happiest nation by *life satisfaction* and Panama by *daily experience*, quite different places (Haybron, 2013, p.4).

⁷⁶ Suggestively subtitled '*The classic work on how to achieve happiness*'.

⁷⁷ And many of the other work-related happiness/flourishing strategies: Amabile & Kramer (2011), Dolan (2014), Goffee & Jones (2013, 2015), Huffington (2014), Krznaric (2012), Lips-Wiersma & Morris (2011), Notter & Grant (2012), O'Toole (2005), Seligman (2011), Stewart (2013).

'If we enjoyed work and friendships, and faced every challenge as an opportunity to develop new skills, we would be getting rewards out of living that are outside the realm of ordinary life. Yet even this would not be enough to assure us of optimal experience. As long as enjoyment follows piecemeal from activities not linked to one another in a meaningful way, one is still vulnerable to the vagaries of chaos.' (2002, p.214)

For meaning-making through our actions he seemingly points to a sense of *ordering*⁷⁸; something that I resonated with. Thus, I felt that the arrow linking the red and orange boxes rather indicates the **required authenticity of that ordering between what we do and our evaluation of it**. As Fisher relates: *'In practice, they are highly correlated. There is considerable evidence that behaving in eudaimonic ways is predictive of hedonic pleasure'* (2014, p.12). Indeed, Haybron links a sense of leading a meaningful life to our activities thus:

'...I suspect that our lives can only be emotionally fulfilling when they seem meaningful to us. We might think of emotional fulfilment as a mixture of joy and attunement that arises when we appreciatively engage with what we see as valuable. ... In doing things we find meaningful, we achieve a measure of success in things we care about.' (2013, p.102)

That emphasis on we seemingly raises another important caveat to the potential to flourish (and partially denoted by NEF's purple box), that:

'...human flourishing is... essentially self-directed. The point here is not that self-direction is merely necessary for the existence of human flourishing, for surely there are numerous necessary conditions for human flourishing's existence. Self-direction is not simply one of those many conditions. The point is rather that self-direction is necessary to the very character of human flourishing. Human flourishing would not be human flourishing if there were no self-direction involved. Moreover, self-direction is the central necessary constituent or ingredient of human flourishing – that feature of human flourishing without which no other feature could be a constituent.' (Rasmussen, 1999, p.11, my emphasis)

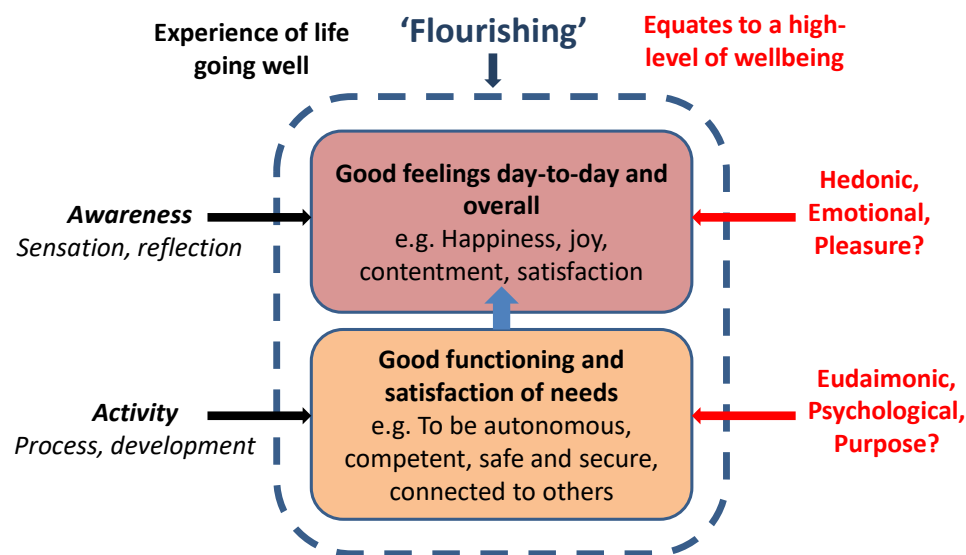
I've inferred that **my flourishing must also be strongly connected to my own efforts**, that I am willing and able to make the effort that (with a nod to Horace (1912, p.20)) such a *carpe diem, carpe vitam*⁷⁹ would imply. Indeed, I noted James O'Toole almost extols this as an obligation, where to not do so would be wasting one's life-potential (2005). Furthermore, denoted by the external conditions, green box, my flourishing also apparently requires me to have the appropriate conditions. Logically, a **supportive situation and relationships with others**. In terms of my thesis, much of the organisational context would seem to lie here.

⁷⁸ Resonating with Antonovsky's sense of coherence (Huppert & So, 2013) and with the definition of well-being given in Dodge, *et. al.* (2012); see glossary.

⁷⁹ Latin for: *Seize the day, seize life.*

All these points were important to my developing understanding of flourishing. Yet, there is a Russian saying: “you can make fish soup out of an aquarium, but you can’t make an aquarium out of fish soup.” Certainly, whilst trying to work through others’ conceptions of human flourishing, comparing them with what I was hearing from my *Peers*, sensing during my client cases, and against other theory, there were times when it all felt rather soupy.

Figure 3.2: Elements of Flourishing (Extract from NEF’s Dynamic Model of Well-being)



However, by continuing to overlay my reading and thoughts onto the NEF model (Figure 3.2.), I began to perceive what dimensions potentially *underwrite* flourishing – the feeling good, the functioning well. Importantly, I could begin to form in my mind a sense of how these various elements might come together that was important for my developing thesis. I’ll try to explain.

Conceptually, understanding human flourishing as the experience of life going well⁸⁰, can be clarified by **comprehending experience here as both noun – an occurrence - and verb – the feeling of it.** Thus, I could conceive human flourishing as comprising a combination of positive processes, events, sensations

⁸⁰ Returning to Huppert (2014, p.1).

and conditions. Put simply (ahem), **I flourish when I consider, or feel, that I am in activity that progresses me towards fulfilling my life's potentials.** This is highly important when recalling my thesis's view on the centrality of work.

In *Figure 3.2.*, our sensation/condition is cast as good feelings, which may be expressed in happiness, joy, satisfaction, or contentment. But, as these originate both *day-to-day and over time*, to me they are either in the *moment* or *evaluative*.⁸¹ It is why I labelled the red box as our *Awareness* of flourishing, to be able to also contain the reflective or contemplative element that is implied here. The orange box, presented as good functioning and satisfaction of needs, I then considered as denoting the *Activity* of flourishing. Although, again apparently time-related when considering the difference between achieving a daily task and proceeding developmentally.

Just these two complexities, by being **inclusive of momentary sensations and contemplations over time and immediate function and a long-term development process**, I hope shows how even standard concepts of flourishing involve a composite of many essential human elements that I needed to consider.

Thereby, I conceived that, conceptually, what underwrites my flourishing is:

- Me doing the work of following and positively **exercising my potentials through the experience of change and development**; and is
- Thereby an **individually constructed notion** that at any particular time is contingent on my expectations, experiences, and culture; and thus is
- By, its very nature, dynamic; **constantly developing and being constructed**⁸²; which
- Means that, as my situation morphs over time, **there are multiple-pathways to it** – from the indefinable extent of one's potential - and so **potentially there are multiple meanings or purposes to it.**

All these aspects go some way to explain why the concept of flourishing is so ephemeral – or perhaps soupy. However, I've felt it important to put this section up-front as it presents much of the ground I

⁸¹ I note that this has specific echoes to the inner and outer arcs of attention familiar to the action research community and the differences between measures of life satisfaction and daily experience in well-being science.

⁸²As meaning, formation, and flourishing are inter-linked, see Sub-section 1.3.1., where I discussed how through work we construct ourselves.

was researching and leads into understanding the *how* of flourishing later (in terms of process and drivers).

Moreover, revealing this core duality - positive ongoing experience as both activity and awareness of it – denoted a circularity to the concept. **As I flourish I am striving to optimise my potential through my activities; when I evaluate this active process positively, I feel the life and positivity of that change as flourishing; which in turn confirms the activities and informs future ones.** Thus, and this was important for me to realise, we never really finish and so human flourishing is both a means and a meaning in itself (confirming Heron, 1996, p.11).

3.2. – Flourishing in my work?

More-or-less concurrently with delving into the theories above I was also engaging with several civil society clients. These, *clinicalesque*, parts of my inquiries (*Practice Case Studies*, described in 2.2.1.1.) have allowed me to explore workplace flourishing, both mine and that of others, *in-situ* as it were. Following the constructivist attitude of my thesis, by utilising different, self-reflexive inquiry practices (discussed in Sub-section 2.2.2.1.), I could expand my learning through these various experiences.

One such case - I call the organisation JUPITER - relates something of a challenging three-year organisational development process. I want to relate it here as it **covers something of my developing understanding of flourishing at work**; revealing edges where my work affected my flourishing and have influenced my practice. The story is presented via a series of *vignettes* relating my work experiences, my reflections, and my sense-making at the time and later. But, first some background.

JUPITER, based in Eastern Europe, works within complex and highly-politicised issues of local democracy and environment. The organisation has political members, from whom the managing board and president is selected. Its professional staff comprise eleven people working at the head office and another thirty working regionally. Owing to a donor's conditions, I was engaged to help them carry-out a phased organisational development process. Primarily I relied on a process of organisational self-

assessment, using benchmark statements across seven organisational areas.⁸³ Sounding mechanistic, the strength of this approach is in fostering a dialogue across the organisation to co-create organisational development priorities. All characters have been given pseudonyms; the main ones being Naomi, a senior manager, and Daniel, the director.

Initially I thought it would be fairly straightforward assignment, but very soon I started to sense in the staff of JUPITER an odd combination of apathy and fear. In particular, despite his assurances, I felt that there was limited engagement from Daniel; who was seemingly wrapped into external political intrigues. I began to note a developing pressure in myself, eager for the process to go well. Though not only as a task, but toward my own hopes and professional abilities. Thinking *'this is the sort of work I want to do, I value'* and so it seemed to me I should flourish while doing it.

In *Vignette 3*, where in mid-2013 during our self-assessment workshop the JUPITER staff jointly reviewed the organisation's performance and practices, I take up the story as I engaged with the issues around my work-flourishing.

Vignette 3 – Chasing Rainbows (JUPITER case, written mid-2013)

Now, on the first day of the workshop, I realise that my concerns over everyone's engagement were well-founded. Despite my careful build-up and preparation, the staff appeared disinterested. Exhibiting a tired indifference towards the assessment and, I felt, in effect towards themselves. Worse, Naomi and Daniel, saying nothing to me, had both departed and disappeared. I feel, as facilitator, that their failure to engage in the organisation's work was mine and I am progressively discouraged. At the end of a session writing in my musing-diary:

'Incredibly low involvement and interest. They are apathetic, zero interest or commitment. I'm trying to get them involved, asking, challenging, reminding of previous issues... It's the non-involvement of the leadership; bodes poorly for the organisation.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, September 4, 2013)

I check my reading of the situation with Laila my co-facilitator, she says:

⁸³ From Crăciun, Lardinois, & Atkinson (2009).

"My impression is they just go there to get paid, half [Daniel] hires are family relations or friends; they are dependents. They don't want to develop. They are happy as they are; no commitment to the organisation, Daniel needs proper communication with the team. [But] believe in what you are doing." (Laila, personal communication, September 4, 2013)

The next morning, after a fitful sleep, I wake feeling drained of enthusiasm and energy. I have strong doubts about everyone's dedication, not just to this process, but to the organisation, and I have growing doubts about myself and my abilities to turn this around.

Avoiding the breakfast room, I go for a morning walk, it was cloudy and drizzling, I don't want to meet anyone, and I talk to myself about how I didn't want to continue this work, but felt obliged to. I saw a rainbow forming in the distance and thought: *'ah perhaps I'm chasing rainbows after all?'* Dispirited I trudge back to the meeting room. Later, when I capture this walk in my diary, I close my observations with:

'Maybe my view of the world is just that; a quixotic adventure, doomed to bring failure and sadness... Where to gain that [enthusiasm] back? I want joy in my [work-] life. How do I deny it to myself?' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, September 5, 2013)

On the third and final morning, following an unannounced two-hour delay, putting me further on edge, JUPITER's board members eventually arrive for a briefing on the assessment's outcomes. Via translation it was difficult and at one point a heated exchange developed between the President, Daniel, and some board members. The staff had mentioned that they were sometimes stressed, but this was translated to mean *in conflict*. Laila attempted to clarify it, but they continued to argue.

Unable to intervene I sit down and closing my laptop I start to collect my things. I was dejected, on top of the general apathy and disinterest, now at the leadership level there was a crippling argument. It felt like failure; I was about to walk out when Naomi leant over to me and pleaded "please stay, wait". I wait, slumped in my chair, surrounded by the agitation, my mood fluctuating between anger and gloom. Driving back from the workshop, bouncing along in Laila's 4x4, she explains that one board member, a political opponent of JUPITER's President, was twisting the self-assessment's findings to threaten Daniel and him.

Daniel became angry towards the staff and that evening he sent them a furious e-mail in which he threatened their positions. As the fallout became clearer I feel pretty raw, not much *flourishing* going on here for any of us, and I was deeply upset that a process I had done well so many times before should end with this result. I resolved to tackle Daniel the following day about whether there was any future for the work.

We sat down together, again late in the day. My sense of exasperation had subsided, but my belief in my professional self was bruised and I felt duty-bound to find a way to gain something helpful for them. Daniel explained why he wasn't present during the assessment as was expected, saying he felt that the staff were fearful of speaking-out in front of him. I asked him whether he thought this was a healthy situation and why he hadn't shared this earlier. I also asked him why he was so upset by hearing their opinions, but he was evasive in his answers; simply not wanting to address the contradiction. Our eventual way forward was to highlight the self-assessment's many positive findings and to prioritise which organisational issues we should address.

That evening Naomi invited me to dinner, she had discussed the assessment with Daniel and, apparently, he had calmed down after speaking with me. She revealed:

"He said "Robert did nothing wrong", but he blames the staff, but didn't really argue with the result [of the assessment] ... the problem is many of them are dependent on him and he feels betrayed." (Naomi, personal communication, September 7, 2013)

I felt that the chance for an open dialogue on the organisation's development had now vanished and I was put in the place of prescribing technical support. This wasn't the way I wanted to work, but there seemed to be no choice.

Following these events and before my flight home I had a whole day free. I used it to make notes on what had happened and I went for a long walk through the city: visiting museums, a flower market and down back streets. *Flâneuresque*; yet noting, thinking, mulling it over and processing. I perceived a **confliction of boredom and tension** demonstrated across JUPITER's staff. Seemingly **produced by career stagnation, limited personal growth, restricted decision-making, and a patriarchal-disdain from the leadership**. Yet I also sympathised with Daniel, he appeared unable and unwilling to let others help.

Seemingly trapped in a political whirlwind, fearful for himself and *his* organisation.⁸⁴ In terms of my thesis, this underscored for me some of the diminishing conditions I had recognised from my career.

Working within this difficult *milieu* also led me to question my usefulness for them; I felt a palpable lack of motivation. Thinking against my *PPP Motif*: My efforts felt rather *Purpose*-less; and, more than once, I felt like withdrawing. *Practice*-wise, despite intense effort, I felt unable to help them. While in terms of *Place*, even though JUPITER is a CSO doing valuable work and I could connect with some of the staff, I was still an outsider. **I saw how distant I was from those things that I seemed to require for my own flourishing.**

To make something of this reflection I made a series of practice points that touched on the process and what I might have done differently (see Annex 3.2.). More significantly though, I noted a clear shift in my attitude from focussing on the organisation to the people in it. It strengthened a developing insight that ‘*Organizations are people*’ (Handy, 1990, p.25), they comprise the persons within them and it is these people that flourish or languish. An organisation doesn’t flourish in the human sense, though it provides either enriching or impoverishing conditions. This **focus on people first became a pervasive thought in my work** (later changing my view of *Place*).

In the following phase (mid-2014) I helped JUPITER’s staff to finalise their organisational development plan, but, as I worked with them, I decided to pay more attention to my *clinicalesque*-experiences. By heightening my musing, walking and painting inquiry practice I hoped to collect what was going on for me and, limited to my perspective, to perhaps better understand their situation. It also provided a way to reengage. So, over the course of nearly two-weeks I would snatch time to *contain my feelings* in my notebook and then make pictorial interpretations of them.

Vignette 4 – Representing Languishing (JUPITER case, written mid-2014)

On the second day I wrote in my diary:

‘I painted my feelings and came up with an image of two persons in a window, veiled or smothered by a curtain, only one white hand showing from behind. I painted it in muted grey; it is the saddest picture I have painted and perhaps the most disturbing. It was how I was seeing JUPITER [at] that moment, with me looking in through the window. I entitled it

⁸⁴ ‘*Fear is arguably the most important source of dysfunction in organization’s today*’ (Notter & Grant, 2012, p.219).

'Window-pain'. I saw that I was not in my place, but looking in on what I could see and not feeling I could open that window or pull back that curtain for those inside. My practice was not sufficient for my purpose.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, July 15, 2014)

The image (see *Figure 3.3.*) symbolised how I felt about JUPITER's people, my inability to support them, and my clear disturbance with that. **Our opportunities, theirs and mine, were being shrouded and constrained.** I felt incapable of uncovering their faces, to free them as I saw it; I could not locate myself purposefully.

Figure 3.3: 'Window-pain'



Later in the week, while waiting for a meeting to start, I was carelessly flicking through an art book and came across a photograph of a cloaked figure. It presented a peculiar and somewhat uncomfortable moment of recognition. Prompting me to sit up and make a photocopy of it. The image inspired another painting (*Figure 3.4.*) completed whilst I sat on the floor of my hotel room:

'I got this idea of veiled, subdued people which turned into what I called "shrouds". I draw other versions in my notebook, with a heavily veiled person, like a covered statue, ...' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, July 17, 2014)

After finishing it, I sat back and wrote the following:

'I did the shrouded figure. I felt it worked well, came to my feeling of the shrouded organisational existences. Made me think of bagged prisoners of war in Iraq, the prisoners of Abu Ghraib. Not good images.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, July 17, 2014)

I viewed the JUPITER people, and by extension myself, as shrouded in their work. Originally, I felt this perhaps too dramatic, but, as our work progressed, I could sense the despondency of the staff.

Figure 3.4: 'Shrouds'



Then I began to toy with the idea of the staff as chess pawns, realising that *pawn* has a derogatory sense and how in chess it has fewer abilities. I had an impression that the pawns would be blinded or smothered too (see *Figure 3.5.*).

Figure 3.5: 'Blinded Pawns'



I wrote:

'I then worked on the pawn image. This time instead of being shrouded I saw them as being blindfolded. I did the blindfold in red, my colour for Place, but with none of the golden colour, ... I can see a chess board with shrouded pawns. Lifting this shroud raising the veil, it seems to be important to me and to my work.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, July 20, 2014)

Using red for the blindfold represented to me how JUPITER - the *Place* - was covering up the vision of the staff; reinforcing the idea of a pawn used at the whim of the player or king. It also reflected my desire to remove it, to liberate, as a core to my work purpose and practice.

I also thought about Daniel, I was worried about him, his situation and his needs - unlike a chessboard life is not all black and white - and I wondered how he was feeling. I sensed that he was also somehow trapped by the political pressures that he incessantly spoke about; and wasn't considering how his actions affected the life of the organisation. So, I began an image of the king playing piece (*Figure 3.6*).

Figure 3.6: 'The Fissured King'



In it the king cannot see because of a purple blindfold - my colour for *Purpose* – but, unlike the *Purpose Sphere* I have painted (see Sub-section 6.1.1.), it is one block colour; a limited spectrum. What I supposed I was figuring is how the kings' own purpose was blinding him to that of others and alternatives.

Furthermore, the king is on a white and blue chessboard. The blue, a colour I had used to denote *Practice*, representing the power or awareness of the king in the game; or maybe it says that the game is just more important for the king. Conspicuously, I gave the piece a large fissure extending from the top of the crown – a symbol of authority and power – all the way down to the base. Following the king is a smear of red like a trail of blood. I saw it as denoting the haemorrhaging of the *Place*, the kingdom.

These indications of *languishing*, as an antithesis, allowed me to better grasp how **organisational conditions** (NEF's purple box) **can diminish**. Little feeling good or functioning well represented here (limited personal development, centralised decision-making, disdaining leadership). Laid alongside the theories covered above, from this negative angle, these images allowed me to connect powerfully with my working experience. And while sometimes frustrated with Daniel I saw him rather differently from the *toxic boss* I've written about before; he wanted, but couldn't accept help.

I'm now struck how dark these images are for a chapter searching for my flourishing. There is a strong feeling of how these images alert me to these diminishing 'norms' – a confirming focus – that can still raise my hackles and increase my resolve to confront them. But I also relive, especially in the Window-pain image (Figure 3.3), my inability to help out. Coming, even while I know I do my best, as a powerful feeling of being unworthy for those I wish to succour. I begin to wonder is there something in me that only notices the shadows in my work – my failure or others' diminishment - or is it that I dread stepping into the light? Or, ultimately, that authenticity for me comes from the struggle, not from success; that my positivity – my flourishing – relies on my need to overcome the 'external adversary' and surmount my inner doubts?

I realised **how multi-faceted and inter-linked was my working experience** and that it connected to my developing conceptual view of flourishing that concluded the previous section (momentary sensations and contemplations over time and immediate function and a long-term development process). Moreover, that **it seemingly requires a self-referenced balance in them**; thereby further moving away from the hierarchy I previously considered for my PPP-facets in *Figure 1.1*.⁸⁵

3.3. – To a Notion of Workplace Flourishing

At the time I was painting the images at JUPITER (Summer 2014) I had started to convene my *Peer Inquiry Group* (see Sub-section 2.2.1.2., for the composition and names). Indeed, following my review of

⁸⁵ As a footnote to this case, Naomi was eventually let go by Daniel. Prior to that we had already talked about her future. I suggested that she build her own organisation, to work on those issues she wants to, and to work in the way she wants to. She asked me to help her with that and now we are both board members of this new organisation.

well-being theory that Autumn-Winter (Section 3.1.), I began to actively inquire with them the following Spring-Summer (2015). I wanted to discuss with people in my field about the ideas and issues that were circulating from my reading and client cases.

This section covers the second round of interaction with the eight *Inquiry Group* members, the first being more of an extended check-in. I wanted to explore with them our sense of work and flourishing: how does it feel to us, when do we not feel it, is it part of our professional experience? I spoke with each *Peer* individually, over the phone, in a bar, or in a car. And, although each of us expressed it differently, there were many notable commonalities to our notions of flourishing. A fuller account is given in Annex 3.3., that was commented on by the *Peers*, but it's worth summarising key parts of our dialogue here. Indeed, building from the previous two sections, **our discussions led to the elaboration of my notion of workplace flourishing**; perhaps the first outcome of my inquiry explorations.

I started by asking each *Peer* what flourishing might mean to them, Liz's response was characteristic:

"What makes me happy now, most flourishing, when I had a very specific project or objectives ... and have a great vision of what I am doing. That is suitably matched to my skills, can do it well, but need to do more learning and stretch myself to do it brilliantly. Some time-pressure and a little stress; that perfect amount. ... I have learnt something, I have delivered something, I have achieved something, and somebody has benefited - get that feedback." (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

Liz's mentions of **personal learning, development, achievement and connection** were expanded on by others:

"I also tick when I learn ... when doing these things, pushing myself ... developing. and when I am paid fairly. When I feel I receive fair compensation that delivers and sometimes a little more for something exceptional, financially or not." (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

"I suppose it's what I would call fulfilment, and that would be a mixture of whether I am making a difference in some way. ... I can't say that much of the work I actually do makes me happy in itself, the actual activities, [it's] the greater purpose of it that is fulfilling. And ... the sense that I am developing as an individual, that is certainly part of it. So, it's a mixture of mission, greater purpose and personal development." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 19, 2015)

"Did it in different moments, [like] leading the fellowship programme [and the] acknowledgment of what you do is good and useful – quality. Help a lot of people to learn. I don't think I became aware of flourishing, but professional satisfaction. In UNDP these moments [too], there the projects were very down to earth and practical within small communities. It was small scale, but very impactful. Part of it [was] when you see what you did has a positive impact on people's lives, in small things: a kindergarten had heating or a Roma child a sandwich and shower before

school, so gets an education. Where you feel that, it is positive feedback.” (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 1, 2015)

The **act of creating and being energized by work** appeared common. Plus, they seemed to indicate that they flourished where there was a nexus of being **positively challenged to develop**, a **self-determined value to the activity** they were doing, and an **authentic connection to others** in some way. I identified with their words, in particular that sense of building something valuable with others (recalling *Vignette 1* above), saying to Laura:

“The things [I was] most proud of were things I felt were right, worked with others, and it came off. Now three programmes I set up, even though I was pushed out [of the organisation], they are still running and flagships. You know yourself; whatever you do the ... effect is enhanced if you do it with others.” (R. Atkinson to L. Lewin, personal communication, April 9, 2014)

James also mentioned this and he reflected on how much he *“...enjoy[ed] that role a lot, being able to enable people to do things, seeing people flourish, [build] meaning for them and learning new things.” (J. Friel, personal communication, April 1, 2015).*

Both Mark and Laura, while also reflecting on the need to work with and for others, pointed out how their **work was primarily a platform for them** to be able to do the things they wanted to do. I found they drew the idea of flourishing in work towards **self-expression, self-actualisation**, and perhaps **being-values**:

“When I am in the flow of work it has less to do with the core of my job, the core of my job is administration, [but it is] the opportunity to do more things that are creative. ...sit down have meaningful discussion and develop something creative. ... Find like-minded people, you can do something together.” (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

“...top of the list, sense of freedom, autonomy and sense of choice. If I have to do something I am compelled to do I see that as debilitating to my sense of flourishing. Autonomy is it the same as the other factors? ... The word choice is a boundary of what you accept. ... I have configured my working world to have it containing mostly things I love to do. I have quite a high need for novelty, and low boredom threshold. What I have is to believe what I am doing is doing something positive and is generative. Has a positive impact. ... When I think of human flourishing I think of being held in a set of human relationships that are nutritious.” (L. Lewin, personal communication, April 9, 2014)

Their use of words like choice and opportunity appeared to denote a certain **requirement for autonomy and self-direction** that underlies their sense of flourishing. Nicholas, although his reflection often took a more negative turn⁸⁶, brought out many other significant aspects:

“... I’m not dying here, [but] I find when I look back to the job at the [previous workplace] [it] was more interesting exciting and rewarding than here. In the [previous workplace] I felt empowered. I had to consult, yet we/I had a freedom to do what we thought we should do. I think we felt trusted, maybe too cool for us, we could have misused it. ... Almost any idea was welcome ... and we could implement it. I found one thing I had the freedom to build my team. Found the most excellent people in the world in my team. We had good working conditions, good office. We socialized; the payment was good at the time. Right ingredients...” (N. Lander, personal communication, May 15, 2015)

I believe Nicholas covers many of the drivers, or conditions, potentially affecting workplace flourishing; the *how* that I explore in Chapter 4. Yet, importantly he brings up specific times or experiences that frame his working life; these were a feature of all of the *Peer’s* personal *career narratives*. They denote those times, experiences or occasions that they realised were a significant part of their personal development and contributed meaning to their view of their work. To me this underlined that **the awareness of our flourishing** (the good feelings element mentioned in Section 3.1.) **is more than momentary experiences**.

Indeed, as the peers were explaining the times when they felt they flourished in the context of these *realisation points* they seemed strongly connected to them. I have my own, shown in many of the *vignettes* (see in Annex 2.1.: *War Stories, Honouring Przem, Five Meetings...*, and *Programme Snippets*), and they appear to me as defining narratives of the constructed understanding of who I am and what my work career means to that. It indicated to me that a **personal contemplation of the meaning of my work and career is important; finding order and connecting purpose within my sense of work-flourishing**.

Importantly some raised an age, or *generational*, aspect that seemed to signify that **our perceptions of whether we are flourishing, and what leads to that, changes as we develop**. Reflecting that people move – develop - in different ways, at differing paces and to different outcomes or positions. For example, as some research indicates (Dolan, 2014, p.34), when younger we concentrate more on pleasure and less on purpose. The importance of these *realisation points* in our career narratives established for me that there is an element of *contemplation* about our working lives. **Denoting the**

⁸⁶ And why I suggested to anonymise his contribution.

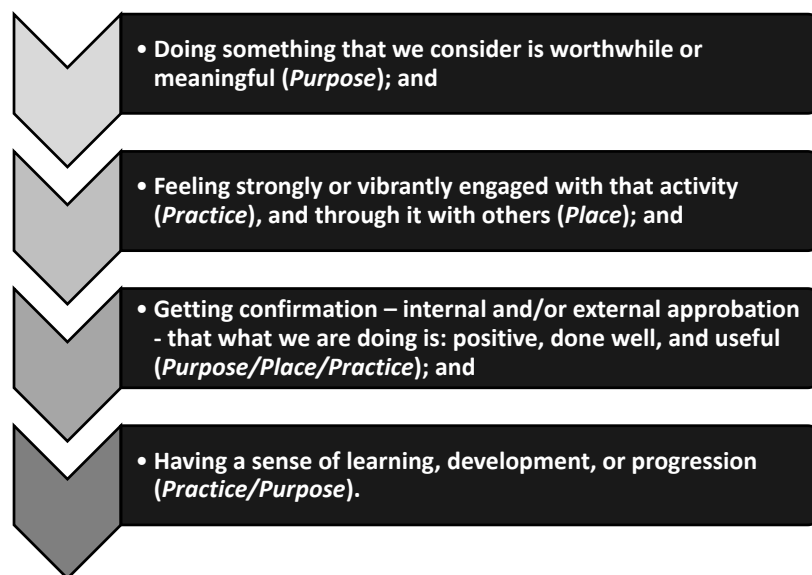
constructed nature of our evaluation of whether we flourish and linked with how we change and develop through the experiences we gain (mentioned in Section 3.1.).

This passage reflects much of what I took from the Peer discussions. Although it does seem rather dry to me now; presented rather as 'data' and analysis. Much vibrancy in our engagement is lost here, missing the flavour of the back-and-forth that took place as we spoke. How my views changed and adapted fluidly as ideas and suggestions popped up. I recognise how it is my clarifying/expert voice coming in again. That urge to present my case, reifying what the emergent, compelling essence, coming from the interaction with others, told me. I perceive myself as catching butterflies, once they are caught, pinned and displayed, the essence of the butterfly is lost. I query this realisation, in terms of my OD practice. How to sustain this dialogic influence through my work without losing its essence?

Ultimately, from my reflection on these dialogues and after a review by the *Peers*, I could cluster the main features together (Figure 3.7.).

Figure 3.7: Our notion of Workplace Flourishing

**We flourish (feel good, function well)
through work when we are:**



While set-out in operative terms, this captures the main expressions we jointly-proposed as **underpinning conditions for workplace flourishing**. It partly goes beyond NEF's boxes in Figure 3.2., by including external approbation, yet contains those frames of *Awareness and Activity* that I thought

important to their conception of flourishing (all four statements contain both). I was also able to approximate the facets of my *PPP Motif* with them (explored further in section 6.1.).

I note it resonates with Kilfedder and Litchfield's definition in their paper: *Wellbeing as a Business Priority* (quoting McDaid (2011)). I adapt it slightly:

'A dynamic [work experience] in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when [through it] an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society.' (2014, p.357)

Even so, finding a single, neat universal-definition wasn't my main goal here, rather to understand **what seemingly comprised my/our flourishing through work; the conditions for feeling good and functioning well in the workplace**. Indeed, a key purpose of my research has been to gain my own understanding of what a flourishing work life might entail. So, as I looked to devise this **operational notion of workplace flourishing** to take forward into the rest of my inquiry, it became a way for me to view my own work-life. From this, and the other indications that emerged around *what* is flourishing, I was better able to explore *how* I flourish (at work). We go there next.

Chapter 4. – How do we flourish (at work)?

‘Man tends to actualize himself in every area of his life, and his job is one of the most important areas. The conditions that surrounding the doing of the job cannot give him this basic satisfaction; they do not have this potentiality. It is only from the performance of a task that the individual can get the rewards that will reinforce his aspirations.’ (Herzberg, et. al., 1993, p.114)

Here the focus of my exploration shifted from what is flourishing to the *how* of it. This is important, as how we flourish has strong work/practice and organisational implications. Herzberg *et. al.*’s observation above usefully underlines the two directions that these inquiries took. Firstly, to understand **what might promote or limit my workplace flourishing**, say *drivers* or *needs* (and maybe connections to *PPP*), and, secondly, to **understand the inner-process** of it.

Initially, I had a rather narrow view of the first. Expecting that it would simply require me to define those common factors (signified by *External Conditions*; *Figure 3.1.*, in NEF’s model, my initial guide) that apparently support or hinder those features of my *notion* shown in *Figure 3.7*. Indeed, a large part of my continuing reflection with the *Peers* focussed on this; what I **came to view as the *enrichers* and *diminishers* of workplace flourishing** (covered in Section 4.2., below and Annex 3.3.). Yet, while later useful for my work/practice, it had limits in terms of application (see Chapter 5.).

The second, relates to my comprehension that it is through the *experience of work* where I become truly motivated and find fulfilment. Recall from Section 3.1., above, that human flourishing, as contained in the experience of life going well, is to understand *experience* both as noun – an occurrence - and verb – the feeling of it. Thus, my exploration into the *how* of workplace flourishing needed to reveal something of the personal processing, or evaluation, of my work experiences. I mused this was **the *Dark Matter* of workplace flourishing** (following the NEF model, conceivably comprising the *Personal Resources* and how that and the other boxes interact). This is covered in Section 4.3.

4.1. – Considering *how* I flourish at work

In the previous chapter my JUPITER *vignettes* touched on how that work experience impacted on me. I refer to moments of connection and periods of dismay. To gain further insight into the how of my workplace flourishing, and to give further framing to this question, I now relate another client case, URANUS a leading environmental advocacy NGO, and the reflections that came from it. It shows how my inquiries were revealing both the drivers and process of my flourishing.

Much of URANUS's work revolves around their campaigns, which, as they work at the European-level, are highly technical, requiring in-depth knowledge of the European policy *fora*. URANUS has around thirty staff, placed either in issue-based programmes or administrative units. A fuller account of the six-month OD process I led is covered in Annex 4.1. My OD practice is covered in the following chapter, but here, thinking of the *how* of flourishing, it's necessary to concentrate on my reactions and feelings.

I was approached by Melissa, the Director of URANUS, in mid-October 2014. She recalled some work I had done for them three-years before and they wanted to work with me again. Early-on, in my musing-diary, I reflected on my work-hopes:

'I was so pleasantly surprised to be approached by them, it feels great that even after three years the positive impression I've made was still there. It pays off to work conscientiously and diligently, even if the [work] days are not enough. Feel good.'

I so want to do this work, they are great and committed people, they do brilliant work (I think they are the best group I have worked with). Helping them would be something really worthwhile and is important. It adds an extra pressure, don't mess them up!!! They are completely overwhelmed with work, how to do this? It's a bit daunting. I want to go back to the learning from JUPITER and do this even better.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, October 15, 2014)

Here was a potentially *learning-rich* environment, one that energised me more than perhaps anything I'd had to work on in a number of years. It gave me a sense of excitement and opportunity, with a genuine feeling of being able to focus more on my working practice, to develop the type of work that I hoped to do more of. In particular, I felt I was somehow rescuing my approach *injured* by the JUPITER experience. Yet mixed in with these sensations was a certain tautness and doubt; tangible nerves about the potential for it to not work out. It reveals some drivers connected to my flourishing *notion* and *PPP*, and also the evaluative process, a coherence-making, going on for me. I continue.

A core part of my work, as with JUPITER, revolved around facilitating an organisational self-assessment (OSA) process for them. The mechanics of this practice are covered in Chapter 5., but it is necessary to mention that in the build-up to the event I had incorporated into it a new *Work Enriching Approaches* section. This new element broached workplace flourishing questions directly to my client, highlighting my researcher/practitioner approach. *Vignette 5.*, covers my reflections on my practice as I facilitated their OSA session in early-2015.

Vignette 5: Flourishing Practice (URANUS case, written early-2015)

It's the day of the self-assessment I have those familiar anxieties about how the session will go. Have I planned to cover too much ground with them? Will the new *Work Enriching Approaches* statements work out? Would they call it all into question and then I'd be orbiting JUPITER again?

I don't eat, just coffee, and I head off early to get to the meeting room to get ready. As I walk – I always walk where possible – I'm asking myself why I'm so nervy. I find it a peculiar failing, it annoys me. I've done this work many times, although usually with a colleague, and I have seen how it works. How people engage with it, an assessing and yet discursive process. Still, I had never been quite so tense. Echoes of last time, a doubt about my abilities; even pressure from my inquiry.

The fifteen members of URANUS, around half the staff, arrive in packets of two or three. From Melissa the Director to campaigners, admin staff, finance people, and communications. Not too large or too small, I'm feeling they are actually almost a perfect group to do this with. Everyone is seated; expectant faces. I run through an explanation of what we were going to do: the statements, the scoring process, the need for discussion, and the expected outputs. I calm their fears (their fears, funny!) that they were to be *self-assessed*: "*No just the organisation and its processes and practices.*" Reiterating that it is a group process and "*it's about the organisation's performance.*" Angela URANUS's operations manager helps me by taking notes to supplement my recording. I feel easy, we are off.

As usual the process takes some time to move, with many questions and clarifications. But I'm responding, giving examples, small observations, little jokes; and I settle into my task. I feel my

confidence building, a proficiency towards them. I steer through the difficult parts, I give time for them to raise views and discuss.

They are warming up and I have a growing sense that they are engaging with the process. I begin to relax and enjoy the interaction. Their individual characters come out to me more, and those I was initially wary of I take time to bring into the discussions. I warm to them as a group, I rather like them. There are flashes of problems, but more flashes of smiles. The usual rift between administration and programme units is evident. I tell them I see it all the time: *"it's pretty normal."*

They're listening with respect to one another now and they start to understand one another's positions better. There is banter too; it begins to be fun. At a break Melissa asks me how I feel it is going. I say although a bit slow, I am satisfied: *"The assessment results are comparably good to many other organisations I've seen, plus there are very good discussions that are worth holding open."* She laughed, and said *"well not surprising with a bunch of alpha-campaigners."*

We get to the part where we assess URANUS against my new *Work Enriching Approaches* statements. I confide that these are new, but that I feel they might have important resonance for them. Curious to see how they will discuss them I'm a bit on edge. Yet I needn't have been; the discussions are both long and exploratory, and they reveal several important organisational issues.

We close the day, we've not covered all I hoped for, but it's enough. Melissa invites everyone for a beer, but I have to dash to the airport to get my flight. I sit on the metro heading out, I start to relax, falling deep into my chair, massaging my eyes, feeling the tightness in my arms and legs fade, reflecting on how it had gone. I feel overwhelmingly tired, but in a satisfied way, the way you get from making worthwhile effort; like finishing a long hike. My wife sends me an SMS asking how it went, she knows how nervous I'd been. I send her a positive reply, finishing with *'I'm happy and exhausted!'*

I would say overall, I flourished through the work with URANUS (there is more in Annex 4.1.). As I worked, and on reflection, there was a resurgence of confidence in myself that built from URANUS's positive working context; how different from JUPITER. Indeed, as a piece of presentational knowing I

believe this *vignette* says a lot about my work-flourishing and **the interaction of activity and awareness in my work experience. Where flourishing drivers/needs and process seemingly combined.** When things were going well I was feeling competent, as I engaged with people and them with me I sensed relatedness. So, it is worth dwelling further on this case and where, influenced by my reflections on other cases and past experiences, I was able to note some of these drivers/needs and processes and how, as *enrichers*, they connect with my *PPP Motif*.

Firstly, I saw how my work experience was stretching and interesting, gratifying and nerving. My nervousness and doubts were evident on several occasions; it didn't feel very flourishing at those times. Especially where I initially stressed about messing-up the work; blowing the chance. A sense that this is *'what I want to do in my career right now, but can I actually succeed at it?'* I have been working with those doubts, it is an aspect I have in my character, but I also know that it drives me as well. Realising that I need this tension in my work to **engender a feeling of authenticity** and that my sense of work flourishing is, perhaps counter-intuitively, driven by vocational qualms - a pressure - to prove myself.

There is something that I find difficult to square away here. I wonder what does it mean for my evaluation of my work experiences if I can feel, in the long-term, positive about something that was sometimes, in the short-term, rather hard? Or even towards the longer-term diminishing work environments, where I now believe that I did some of my best work. Is it again that seeming need in me for an authentic, 'real' experience in my work? Combining effort, struggle perhaps, and growth. I hear echoes in some of my reflective vignettes. That desire for vibrancy, an edge, where I can sense my own change. A change built from lively interaction with others in a genuine situation. Perhaps it denotes a need for me to be bolder.

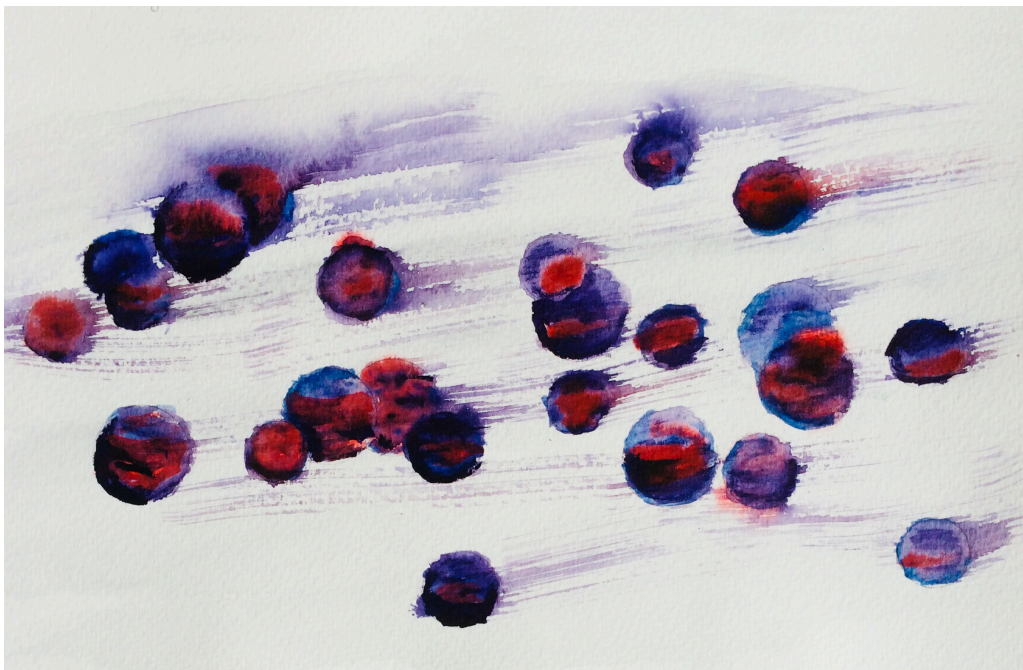
The mission of URANUS and the renown of the organisation in my field both reflected my civil society focus. I'll admit to feeling a certain degree of reflected kudos and esteem from working with them, but it was more of a deeper-*Purpose* connection. This was represented by me working like hell for them and why I took the work for limited recompense. I earned very little, but the **Purpose-driven meaning-making** allowed me to take this on. Only after concluding did I feel a bit undervalued; no longer related perhaps.

Indeed, to be connected with people, to feel **personally and professional respected**, spoke to the need for **relatedness in my work**; especially with those I admire. Certainly, I know Melissa and Angela, although not well, respecting them both as individuals and for their work. I saw that I enjoyed a level of

companionship and professional intimacy with them that I was missing from my work with JUPITER. I gained positive feedback from why they had come to me for this work and also fulfilment when I could see it starting to go well and they were satisfied. I recognise my need for **approbation** and **ongoing feedback** from my work. Melissa's tone differed starkly from JUPITER's Daniel: *"I would like to express URANUS's great satisfaction from our co-operation"* (Melissa, personal communication, September 8, 2015).

I rather liked the URANUS staff too. They are mostly young, dynamic, exciting to work with and exhibit an engaging commitment to their mission. I valued the supporting role I had, to **help them to help themselves** (a soft-mentoring/catalysing role), and getting them to laugh at their harder times. But I noted that in this, and other cases, the sense of community was missing for me. It made me wonder, with links to *Place*, whether I need in my professional life some sort of **longer-term involvement**. Following the OSA workshop I decided to try and capture something of my processing of the experience. To me the image (see *Figure 4.1.*) symbolises a swarm of activity, perhaps the staff of URANUS, passing me by. I see the engaged activity, but am not really a part of it.

Figure 4.1: Vibrant crowd (Created early-2015)



That I **learnt and achieved a lot** was an enormous process facet in my sense of flourishing (more in Annex 4.1.). My **feeling of development in the moment and my realisation of that later** meant this was

a flourishing piece of work. Working with URANUS was a significant **professional opportunity to do new things**. It drove me, and the inquiry, forward. Sure, I did rely on my known competencies, but I was able to develop from that and be daring to do things differently.

Success in this work certainly fed into the *Practice*-needs of my professional sense of flourishing.

Building competence for example when:

- I realised the limits of my practice, such as the limit of control I have over any outcomes, learning to see more of the good than what was weak in my work; a respectful self-belief;
- I saw how I was learning to better respond to and incorporate others' ideas – to go with the emergence; allowing things to develop organically; and
- I could deal with the resistance that came from one manager opposing the process, being able to sit with and understand what the other might be feeling.

Having these realisations was helpful for me personally, by slowly drawing them into an understanding of my own flourishing through work. Yet, they cover mainly positive aspects. So, considering the origins of my inquiries, I recognised that some of my work opportunities provided rather opposite experiences and I felt that I should reflect on them too. Let me now introduce a short *vignette* from another client case SATURN, the lessons from which add something to the earlier JUPITER story.

SATURN is a small private foundation that I'd intermittently supported during the inquiry period. They'd been looking to hire a manager for their philanthropic work and replace the retiring incumbent, but despite three attempts and three hires, of very different people, the board were never satisfied and each person was subsequently let go (the *Lonely Chair* picture in *Figure 2.7.*, refers to this). I had begun to see a repetition in their actions and felt there was a lack of openness to challenge the root causes. In short, I no longer believed I could help them and working with them had become largely unfulfilling.⁸⁷

For the third hiring attempt (mid-2016) they contacted me again and, although I advised them to use a head-hunter, they asked me to be involved. I acquiesced, realising something in me doesn't like failure. This *vignette*, *Clocking-in*, comes from a short burst of writing in my musing-diary as I reacted to their e-mail requesting that I assist by reviewing some of the already interviewed candidates' resumes. It highlights aspects of my own sense of frustration around the work.

⁸⁷ Wryly, I note SATURN equates with the ancient Greek god Chronos, who devours his own children to prevent them from usurping him...

Vignette 6: Clocking-in (SATURN case, written mid-2016)

It's Monday morning, I'm back from a trip, flown in yesterday. I'm opening e-mails, but I'm taut. I want to be off, I want to be engaged with my roles, but this work is not that. For SATURN a list of CVs to read, no real need as they've been interviewed already. Why do they want me to do this? If they have no confidence in me to interview them then what added value is there in this?

I review the former evaluation criteria – I'm almost irrationally irritated – I feel it rising in me. So, I redo them. That's better, some improvement on the last time. I read the CVs, alphabetically; how else? My breathing calms. I take time, get into it. I score the criteria and make notes on what more 'we' need to find out about them. I write 'we' and it feels odd to do so.

So, will these notes be followed up through the candidates references or a second round? Am I asked for this? Does [board member] trust my opinion? I think they need a new way of selection, getting to know them first, being open; and not seeing their staff as superannuated butlers. But they are too conservative, have no authentic work experience, and they just don't want to change. Seems a waste of time, at least I'll get paid....

This *vignette* shows a lot of **negative diminishing-issues related to this work**. Firstly, I'd reached a point, *Practice-wise*, with them, where I considered the work to be useless. I wrote: *'...what added value is there in this? I review the former criteria – I'm almost irrationally irritated – I feel it rising in me'*. Secondly, how missing any connection and dynamism with them contributed to additional irritation: *'I want to be engaged with my roles...'* Thirdly, it also exposes my feeling that we were not attending to the deeper leadership change I thought was required within SATURN's governance. These were the parts we never seemed to get to and that frustrated me professionally.⁸⁸

Interestingly though, the *vignette* also shows where I shift in my thinking about the work. When reworking the criteria, eliding the long-term purposelessness and concentrating on the short-term task at hand: *'So I redo them, that's better, some improvement on the last time. I read the CVs,*

⁸⁸ Eventually in 2018, the board was reformed and a new organisational set up was put in place. Although I wasn't involved perhaps my prompting laid some ground for this change.

alphabetically; how else? My breathing calms'. I recognise that I often do this, looking for a learning or development angle; even in the mundane. But here it feels like a *coping strategy*, as I wrangled with connecting to a piece of work by projecting something positive into it. Even from this short passage several aspects of my work and my processing of them are raised.

These indications from my case *vignettes* raised additional inquiry questions. Personally, I was *getting* many of those conditions or factors that seemingly influence whether I might flourish, but for my OD practice I still **wanted to see whether I could characterise them better**, so that I could voice them to others (Apollonian-intent). I felt that I could do so by defining both *enrichers* and impoverishers, or *diminishers*. I also felt uncertain of the process of flourishing; what was *the chemistry* between activity and awareness? My explorations into the *how of workplace flourishing* continued.

4.2. – Identifying *enrichers* and *diminishers*

Early on in the inquiry, by supposing there was a connection between flourishing and the human tendency towards self-actualisation, I found inspiration in Maslow's *pyramid of needs*: '*This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming*' (Maslow, 2013, p.19). Furthermore, it dovetailed into Frederic Herzberg's ideas on work-motivation (Herzberg, 1987; Herzberg, et. al., 1993):

'The factors that lead to positive job attitudes do so because they satisfy the individual's need for self-actualization in his work. The concept of self-actualization, or self-realization, as a man's ultimate goal has been focal to the thought of many personality theorists. ...[Where] the supreme goal of man is to fulfill himself as a creative, unique individual according to his own innate potentialities and within the limits of reality.' (Herzberg, et. al., 1993, p.114)

Herzberg presents supporting factors for work stimulation as either distinct '*satisfiers*' or '*dissatisfiers*' (Herzberg et al., 1993, p.xiii), characterised as either *motivators* or *hygiene factors*.⁸⁹ Their viewpoints engaged me and I wondered whether there were implications for my thesis. Indeed, the *motivators*

⁸⁹ Interestingly they are not opposite ends of a continuum, but rather provide either mainly positive or negative effects on work motivation.

identified by Herzberg and his collaborators appear to inter-relate with the three *intrinsic* motivators of SDT mentioned earlier (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68).⁹⁰

I thought, owing to this resonance between self-actualisation and flourishing, that an analogous **set of factors that contribute to or detract from our potential for flourishing** might be found. Thus, by identifying these *enrichers* and *diminishers* I could potentially incorporate them into my OD practice. This aspiration reflected my desire to pragmatically characterise and communicate applied outcomes from my inquiry. In this section I describe how I attempted this, but briefly I consider some others' attempts.

Martin Seligman has proposed, in his book *Flourish* (2011), that: '*happiness, flow, meaning, love, gratitude, accomplishment, growth, and better relationships, constitute the content of human flourishing*' (2011, p.2). Thus, for him, the goal of increasing flourishing can be done by '*increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment*' (2011, p.12); these represent his conditions and drivers. In *Good lives: prolegomena* (1992), Lawrence Becker proposes a worthy list of seventeen '*Criteria Goods*' that support the good life (1992, p18-22). These two propositions, and that of many others, are all very beguiling as, while making clear that **no single factor drives our flourishing**, they potentially give the impression that we might be able to follow a formula or a recipe to flourishing.

Returning to my earlier guide, the NEF model identifies four domains of well-being at work, each with various drivers and approaches proposed (Jeffrey *et al.*, 2014, p.16-40). I found them valuable for extending my view of the potential range of noteworthy factors; especially as they relate both to work conditions and work sensations. Yet, in the detail, I felt that they presented an uneasy mix of concept and application. Soon, I realised that I needed to attend to this tantalising cycle in my inquiry and try and fathom something for myself.

So, towards the end of 2015, following the work with URANUS, my Apollonian-intent kicked in and I approached the *Peers* to see if they would be willing to further investigate their sense of flourishing. I proposed to collect daily work-reflections in a diary over a month. Most of the eight *Peers* agreed, although often with reservations about their ability to maintain the entry keeping (one declined and two

⁹⁰ 1). Achievement, 2). Recognition for achievement; 3). Work itself; 4). Responsibility; and 5). Advancement and growth. (Herzberg *et al.*, 1993, p.xiv)

ultimately did not manage to compile any entries). I also kept a reflection-diary, as did Kate and Louise from *A Tale of Two Sisters*.

I wanted to leave it up to them to decide how to go about it, not wanting to be prescriptive and desiring potential for emergence, but I suggested that entries were made free-form, originating from a free-fall writing prompt: *If I were to describe my working day - in terms of whether I felt that I flourished - I would say that...* However, several asked for an outline, so I prepared a simple diary-format with days and indicative questions.⁹¹ I resisted a request for scoring, as I was interested in personal reflections and not numerical data; feeling that it could be misunderstood as quantitative-pretense.

My intention was to see if we could distinguish, on any given day, when we were flourishing or not, and what might be the cause of it. Could we identify those conditions or factors that make a difference to our sense of flourishing at work? Then, if we could do so, how did we act to enable it? What of this was *from* us and what appeared externally driven? And also, whether our day-to-day experiences of flourishing *add-up* to a similar overall assessment over a period? In other words, how did our daily assessment eventually mesh together with our longer-term assessment? This final issue is covered in Section 4.3., below, here I relate the outcomes of the earlier parts.

Together we compiled some 104 days of diary reflections, which I reviewed to bring together main directions and recurring ideas (following the same approach described in the *Nota Bene* of Annex 3.3.). I must mention here that I used the *PPP* aspects and the headings of the *Work Enriching Approaches*, developed for URANUS's OSA (covered in Section 5.1.), as a framework for this review. Although this might be criticised for being potentially self-confirming, I felt it necessary to have some way to enable placement of the issues.

The diary texts are too long to quote at length, but an expanded review is given in Annex 4.2. However, I want to give you a taster of them here and how, by **drawing from them, using my case reflections, literature, and the earlier discussions with the Peers, I attempted to identify headline *enrichers* and *diminishers*.**⁹²

⁹¹ 1). How do you feel about the past working day? 2). What was the reason for the assessment you gave? 3). What could have been done differently to enhance your sense of flourishing in the day? Is there an approach or a practice or an attitude that might lead to a more enriching work experience?

⁹² Dates relate to when I received the diary.

Here I see that I am again circulating back to a more positivist approach. Looking for clarity and surety, using the Peer discussion for data gathering and hoping for pointers. Noting how this oscillation, between Apollonian-intent, positivist data-gathering and Dionysian-emergence, underlines my inner-research/work challenge. Revealing a disquiet in my methods perhaps, or an impatience at finding a workable pattern. And yet I see how my movement across these different intuitions brings a value to my work. By bringing them together, I relish how it deepens my work practice. I now recognise a need to be bolder in the way I bring these two aspects together; to keep trying newer or alternative methods.

Unsurprisingly, across our entries, **development, growth, and learning** featured strongly as *enrichers*. Although, we tended to focus on specific aspects of it (**success, completion, competence, or the work stream**), rather than an overall developmental sense. This was a diary so it was perhaps to be expected:

'...doing something new, I was scared but I really enjoyed it, especially because it worked. One more round of positive feedback from the ... presentation, I start to enjoy being congratulated.'
(A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

Specific *Practice* contributions to our positive daily evaluations primarily revolved around when we **used our skills to good effect** (competence) and within our **own direction** (autonomy):

'...once I got in "flow" actually enjoyed working on it and felt like I was adding value to the initial work done by colleague. More flourishing [day] – feeling of being good at what I was doing, and of it being useful and potentially leading to more business.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

Seeing success or completion helped us to evaluate a day positively. But, connected with that was that we and others should **value what we do** (*Purpose* and meaning related) and gaining affirmative **feedback** (formally or informally) appeared significant:

'Another good day, full of rain though, but really cranked on, got the [redacted] done, sent off, worked through the proposal with some great feedback from [redacted], and a good mood from [redacted]. Was a lot of sense of completion and that helped.' (R. Atkinson, personal work diary, November 30, 2015)

Indicating that those work contexts that **confirm and recognise our achievements** are enriching; especially when coming from supervisors. And also indicating **connections with others**, thereby positioning effective **co-work/team work** and **open and genuine communication** between colleagues as important:

'Flourishing day just feeling valued by the practice and clients – feeling I'm doing something of value.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

Indeed, an overriding *enricher* appeared to be the quality of **connections with others**. It was something we all needed, seemingly linked to **trust** and **engagement**. There were a multitude of examples where this connection, either with colleagues or stakeholders, made many situations richer:

'Good contact with supervisor and colleagues – productive, but also pleasant. I like working with these people!' (A. Beckmann, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

'Lovely flourishing work conversation with a wise peer/colleague. Very grounding.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

I now consider **strong relatedness** as an underpinning for my own flourishing; without it I feel sort of adrift. Indeed, where I had once thought *Place* was only about my **connect to the organisation and its mission/purpose**, I see that the solidarity and positive team spirit, connected to *Place*, is my paramount need from this aspect.

An unexpected factor (so not self-confirming) was that we all mentioned **environmental conditions** – like the weather - and how they mirrored our mood about the day:

'Warm day, hyacinths in bloom on my desk made it good.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

In Herzberg's motivation theory office conditions are a hygiene factor; reducing motivation if poor, not enhancing it. Perhaps this demonstrates how a sense of flourishing is different from work motivation? No, we are not motivated by hyacinths in bloom (unless we are a gardener), but perhaps it speaks to our aesthetic-sense, our spirit. That, I think, is connected to our flourishing through the awareness we have of our environment. As such, I believe that these positive environmental comments are rather **indicating when we are in a flourishing moment**, and, I would conjecture, that when actively noticing a negative environment it shows we are more aware of diminishing conditions. That leads me to the other side, where our diary entries raised a number of *diminishing factors*.

Notably, and perhaps obviously, feelings of **failure** appeared diminishing to us all:

'Again, productive, but largely a sense of juggling multiple things and not necessarily being in flow with anything particular.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

But again, as with the positive development effect, we rather wrote about the facets behind this sense of failure; say being **unproductive** despite working hard. Indeed, especially where we were unable to address the causes; **low power, our inabilities**:

‘Neutral or languishing: [REDACTED] will be a failed project, I know it. I wish people ([REDACTED]) would have a more open mind, this is where I see leaders damaging organisations.’ (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

Importantly, from an organisational perspective, **how we deal with failure** seemed central. Especially with regard to the way failure is viewed by us and within an organisation’s culture. This is also linked to **feedback** from others, particularly supervisors, or rather the **lack of it or the lack of the right sort**. Indeed, **low levels of relatedness** were notable in reducing our sense of workplace flourishing.

We were wary of the **agenda of others** being foisted onto us, with evident connections to **work overload, ineffective meetings**, and **task isolation**. Perhaps allied to this was the fairly common frustration amongst us of being unable to **control our schedules**:

‘All meetings today. No productive time. More neutral to languish. Best part is not walking away with any new work.’ (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

Unnecessary administration, rules, or wastefulness are rather clearly not our cup of tea either. In fact, the high number of comments makes this a notable diminishing facet. Although I felt it was not administration/rules in itself that was the issue, but rather **where the administrative culture is applied in an inflexible, unresponsive, or malicious manner**:

‘Notary: I hate senseless bureaucracy and waste – 50 Euro for a signature!! [REDACTED] stood me up, again – a waste of my time and a lack of respect for me....’ (A. Beckmann, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

Many cited **repetitiveness**, or a **lack of variety**, as a *diminishing* factor:

‘And it’s kind of same old same old every day. So lack of variety. The patients can be very demanding and there’s no let up from seeing them. I’ve deskilled, lots of skills I have used in previous jobs I don’t use any more. When I have been given extra responsibilities I’ve not been given much, if any, time to do them, so rather than feel that they are giving me an opportunity to progress at something non-clinical, maybe, they just make the job more stressful.’ (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

Yet I don’t flourish just because I have a work trip to Madrid or Amsterdam, even though I enjoy it. It is seemingly what that newness brings to me in term of learning and growth that matters and I think this

diminisher comes from recognising when we have **few opportunities to develop** and not about novelty *per se*.

Nor does it mean just loading more into a job (*'Job loading merely enlarges the meaninglessness of the job'* (Herzberg, 1987, p.10)). As seen in Kate's case where the job loading practices seemingly exacerbated that imbalance she feels in her working-life, a **work and life flexibility** that she craves, and the imposition that work demonstrates for her. I began to feel that this craving, and some other annoyances, are rather symptoms of when work is not contributing to our sense of flourishing.

Our need to see achievement, and not just to be working hard, was more complex than I had first thought. So, even when we were busy, ticking things off our 'to-do-lists', it was not enough for us if we **couldn't connect to that work** and the task being done:

'I feel a bit [of] sense of responsibility for multiple projects at the moment and a bit isolated.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

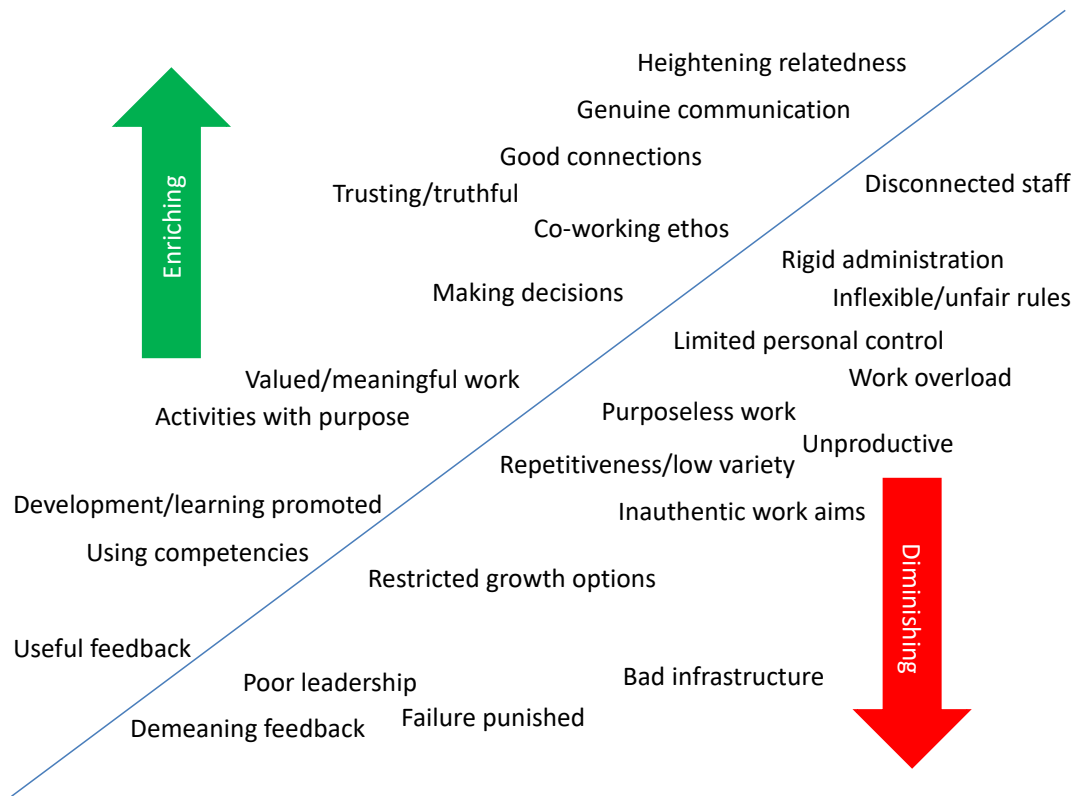
I noticed in my diary (and in *Vignette 6*) how my inability to engage with a client, or being disconnected from a task for whatever reason, diminished my sense of *Purpose*, undermined my professional *Practice*, and loosened my *Place* within it. This indicated to me that if **those things being won – or done - are not coherently valued by me**, then a strategy of daily *small-wins* (Meyersen & Scully, 1995, p.594-595) is not sufficient to support my sense of workplace flourishing. It suggests solely focussing on daily-achievement would be a fallacious strategy. Sure, while completing *disconnected* work I felt some satisfaction in doing what I do well (exhibiting competence), but **separating my daily work's contribution from my career-story/life felt incoherent**. In other words, the evaluation or assessment of my daily work and its meaningfulness and connection to my professional life and work purposes is important.

A few other *diminishing* factors were given, such as **problems with infrastructure** or a perceived **lack of work status**, however, one final issue of note related to decision-making. Or rather **limited personal decision-making** and, the oft cited, **lack of leadership clarity** (in decisions themselves and who was meant to make them):

'Frustration that I can't influence this partnership.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

From my reflections I was able to roughly *map* what I felt were key *enrichers* and *diminishers*.

Figure 4.2. – Headline enrichers and diminishers



Many link to organisational conditions (e.g., rigid administration, learning promoted), but others are dependent on our own evaluation (e.g., meaningful work, inauthentic work aims). But, while this exploration-cycle helped me to **further clarify many organisational drivers** (what NEF calls *External Conditions*) of flourishing or languishing at work. It became evident to me that trying to define all potential *enrichers* and *diminishers* was perhaps fruitless. As, although genuinely originating in my own and the *Peers* reflections, they felt like a repackaging of common work issues. With them covering so many organisational areas, and with *weighting* that is personally contingent, I was uncertain how to act on them (incorporating them into the OSA statements proved insurmountable).

While disappointed I realised, recalling Reason and McArdle's reference to Bill Torbert on the useful '*destructiveness of our inquiry*' (2008, p.7), that, conversely, this attempt served as a useful extension to my thoughts on the organisational principles and characteristics of an enriching organisation (which I return to in Chapter 5.). Indeed, when I look to my OD practice, I do feel they **indicate the main items to encourage and discourage in organisations.**

4.3. – Understanding the process of flourishing

“No man succeeds in everything he undertakes. In that sense we are all failures. The great point is not to fail in ordering and sustaining the effort of our life.” (Conrad, 2011, p.81)

While setting-up the reflection-diaries an associated strand of my inquiry, in Dionysian-fashion, returned. One *Peer*, Andreas, questioned me on how we might define flourishing in an act:

‘I have a basic problem with your diary questionnaire, and that is that I don't see "flourishing" as a momentary state of mind but rather a longer-term condition. I can't say that I am "flourishing" at any specific time. Many of my actual activities and tasks are not especially exciting or uplifting -- but they are necessary, and contribute to a long-term goal and personal development that is relevant for my "flourishing".’ (A. Beckmann, personal communication, January 31, 2016, my emphasis)

His question prompted my further deliberations over where my attitude towards whether I am feeling good and functioning well is formed.⁹³ Essentially questioning: ***what is the way I construct my view of whether I am flourishing or not through my work?*** Indeed, this question, was highlighted in several finalising contemplations of the diaries. Liz’s reflection, when evaluating her day-to-day versus longer-term view, gives form to this:

‘It is interesting how when evaluating the day, I tended to focus on the “good” and land on a flourishing mark for the day, whilst I would honestly mark the month as middle to languishing. I guess I have a tendency to downplay the “bad”, as do many of us.’ (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

Her honest assessment indicated something *in-between* the day-to-day activity of what she does and the longer-term, more contemplative, assessment. My own diary had echoes of this, but first I’ll share an illustrative *vignette* about when I gave a presentation in early-2014 to a group of senior NGO leaders for a grant-providing client (MARS). Through it I also sensed something of this **duality in my own sense-making**.

⁹³ Following the NEF model as a guide, the related process/links between the boxes in *Figure 3.1*.

Vignette 7 – The Presentation (MARS Case, written early-2014)

It was the first time that our team had done such work with this particular client and, despite our preparatory advice, the client's staff rather faltered throughout their part of the briefings. We looked sideways at one another as, virtually hidden behind their computers, they mumbled through their presentations. The confidence and patience of the wary NGO representatives seemed to be evaporating and as the meeting went on there was a tangible tension in the room. At the back I fidgeted uncomfortably waiting for my turn.

I was last to speak, to give tips and feedback on what we, as evaluators, were going to look for in the NGOs' work. I started off by joking how *"I was volunteered to give this presentation"* and then moved on to go through the points I had prepared. I felt relaxed, almost detached, stopping to take questions as I went. The difference between what had gone before was probably very stark to all in the room and I could sense the tension subside.

Despite the potentially challenging atmosphere, I felt competent and sure. I knew I was performing well. A sensation of measured control that gave me a feeling of comfort. Okay, I couldn't answer all the questions, it was not about perfection, but with my supports, I worked through those moments to give the best I could. Apparently to the satisfaction of our audience. Afterwards I felt genuine pleasure in how it went, with immediate feedback and thanks. Hearing that our client had whispered to my colleague *"this is a really good presentation"*.

But later, as I sat in the airport bar sipping a beer, I realised there was more to this momentary exhibition of skill. I felt how the years of experience I have, the thought into what was required, and the efforts I took in preparing, helped it to all come together. It was positive for the community in the room and, beyond the client-consultant relationship, to those wider purposes of my work...

This *vignette* underscores for me how **my flourishing assessment is seemingly both a feature of my functioning during achievement/performance - that it includes momentary feelings - and an ongoing**

evaluation or reflection. Now returning to my reflection-diary, I captured where there was a disconnect between my day-to-day sense of achievement and my longer-term feeling of flourishing. I wrote:

'I am noticing that while stuff gets done (small wins) and I have connects with people, actually this is not really [a] sense of achievement in a bigger picture which I would probably evaluate as helping me to flourish. They are micro-moments and it would need a larger scale feeling or a period of these to build into an evaluative flourishing moment.' (R. Atkinson, personal writing, November 30, 2016)

This indicated where I felt that the work I was doing on a daily basis did not contribute to the longer-term meaning-making I seemingly required to foment my sense of work-flourishing. Yes, there were things I did do well with others and was satisfied, but I had to admit that I had a sense that *Purpose*-wise my work-life could provide more (I return to whether I am flourishing now in my work in Chapter 7.).

You might recall in Section 3.1., where I looked into various well-being measures, that there was a question about whether the most appropriate approach to measure subjective well-being is one based on a momentary assessment (and thus the sum of those accounts) or one from an evaluative/remembered method. John Helliwell explores the differences between daily mood assessments and latter evaluation, revealing that *'...remembered assessments differed systematically from the sum of moment-by-moment assessment'* (2014, p.612).

He goes on to propose that *'...it is the remembered ... that governs subsequent decisions, [thus] ...the remembered experiences should be treated as intelligible and often useful reframing of past experiences to support future decisions...'* (p.612). He gives two key differences between life-evaluations and mood assessments. Firstly, *'life evaluations are much more stable ... than are daily assessments of moods.'* (p.613) and secondly, *'life circumstances are much more closely related to life evaluations than are emotions'* (p.613). His belief is that:

'...life evaluations provide more securely based estimates of the relative importance of different life circumstances, as well as being a more informative guide to future individual decisions and a more useful tool for policy assessments.' (p.614)

However, Felicia Huppert points out that, while life-satisfaction has been the most prevalent measure of well-being, *'...scores on life satisfaction measures typically show little variation within individuals or nations...'* and this *'...is consistent with their trait-like property'* (2014, p.9).⁹⁴ This, to me, implies that

⁹⁴I felt this when I trialled a *Gratitude App.*, released by Action for Happiness, and my assessment of my life satisfaction barely changed, despite having good and bad days.

life-satisfaction reflects the way a person considers their state and would potentially challenge those short-term *methods* or *practices* to support well-being or engender flourishing (e.g., Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Notter & Grant, 2012). Thus, if our sense of flourishing cannot be meaningfully composed from action (components or moments) does that then mean that these practices are irrelevant?⁹⁵ Probably not, as our actual activities are, if not linearly, surely constructive parts of our life-satisfaction assessment.

At the risk of *getting soupy*, there is another theoretical strand to untangle. Leavitt, Fong and Greenwald (2011) explain how there is **a difference between the implicit and explicit job attitudes we hold**. And how they are '*relatively independent intra-individual processes*' (p.672) which inform job satisfaction and thereby its impact on well-being.

Implicit work attitudes are '*accumulated attitudes developed associatively over time [and] are stored in tandem to deliberative and explicit aptitudes about one's job.*' Leavitt *et. al.*, say that they '*...usually precede the cognitive reflection and deliberation used in the construction of explicit attitudes, [and] are frequently inaccessible to the individual,*' (p.673); thus, they are also slow to change. Furthermore, they note that self-report measures of satisfaction may only be giving half the picture (the reflective and deliberative view), one that could be '*...susceptible to impression management, social desirability...*' and other processes, and potentially ignores the automatic and reflexive component (p.682).

Without going into too much detail, among other things, their study showed how '*...individuals who felt a 'conflict' or larger distance between their implicit and explicit attitudes about their organization were less likely to identify with the organization*' (p.681), and ultimately its aims with their own. This could explain how I, and several of the *Peers*, mentioned feeling uncomfortable – dissatisfied – with our work and organisations despite our espousing that they are "*what we want to do*". Perhaps our reflective assessment – *our head and heart* – is in dissonance with our reflexive attitudes – *our gut*.

This would imply that **we, somehow, have to appreciate how our implicit attitudes shape our meaning-making alongside our explicit views**. It has repercussions for managers and change agents whose main influence is seemingly in the day-to-day work experience. And I began to think of how organisational leaders might look to enhance the workplace flourishing of their staff, a staff whose individual

⁹⁵ Alison Beard bluntly opines: '*Where most of the happiness gurus go wrong is insisting that daily if not constant happiness is a means to long-term fulfillment. ...it apparently takes a few tricks*' (2015, p.131). Adam Philips also questions them: "*They seem to me to be the problem rather than the solution*" (Jeffries, 2006).

evaluation of the effect of their working experience might be formed outside of these day-to-day occurrences. Leavitt *et. al.*, suggest that '*organizational leaders should take a two-pronged approach (attending to both deliberative and automatic aspects of organizational life) to optimize organizational well-being*' (p.683). Alas they make no suggestions on how to do so, though I believe that offering an enriching organisational frame and our own reflective-commitment to flourishing would not be far off.

Some of my *vignettes*, while connected to my work and career, are more obtuse reflections or sense-making around my life. They've helped me to ponder on the process of *deciding* whether I flourish or not. One of these pieces, called *Transitioning* (see *Vignette 17*, Annex 2.1.), covers and compresses a few weeks of connected events. It is set in mid-1995, the time when the NGO I worked for finally closed and I moved abroad for another job. In terms of my inquiry, I feel this *vignette* underlines my need for the feeling of a direction to life, and an ordering to that direction. I suppose at the time it recreates I was still developing a conception of who I was and what gave me meaning. It's a mish-mash of emotions and reflections that ends with a shift in my perspective as my situation changes. Another *vignette*, *12: Live Time* (Annex 2.1.), expresses how I realised **the personally-constructed nature of my life and career assessments**:

'I wonder is it that I want this time again, even when in my head I know this is from before now, another time. And I know that this perceived vibrant time, this live time, is really a faux-history, one that never really was how I remember it, or it is how I would wish it to be remembered. In effect a self-edited hagiography that's sum or parts in reality didn't really add up in the lived moment, only in the retrospect, and so a mirage. What does that say to my sense of a life well-lived, if the moments did not add-up, but the recollection does? Perhaps though is it actually that illusion, and my reflection on it that is speaking to a contemporary wish for a live time to claim and create now and in the future?'

Both *vignettes* showed to me that the ordering or coherence of my experiences and my work-life is the vital part in my evaluation of my flourishing. I believe that **it is from a positive sense of the ordering of my actions that my experience of flourishing entails**; although it may not be so for others. The quote from Joseph Conrad that heads this section beautifully presents this *leitmotiv*; where **the how of flourishing comprises both the action towards and the positive evaluation of an ordering of work-life** (also Dodge *et. al.*, 2012, p.222-235; Herzberg *et. al.*, 1993, p.70).

This also indicates that my personal characteristics, such as my personal desire to contribute to civil society, and external factors, say relatedness or approbation, are part of this interaction. Indeed, I now conceive of **this constructed-ordering process as representative of the effort of my life – the Dark**

Matter of my flourishing. It serves as the *connector* between the facets of my notion of workplace flourishing and of my *Purpose, Place, and Practice Motif* (more in Section 6.1.).

I connect here to this process of ordering across my working life. I sense my need for a self-referenced coherence to what I do. I also understand and see it in the way I work too, finding I come back to this need in me to be a co-ordinator, an alchemist, bringing ideas and people together. It drives me to excel, intrinsically. Although, this realisation sets me to task, to reveal those future places, those future roles, where I can play-out my potential and contribute through a way that supports my flourishing.

In summarising this discussion, taking the experience of work-life (recalling experience as both noun – an occurrence - and verb – the feeling of it) as a combination of positive processes, events, sensations and conditions that progresses me towards fulfilling my life’s potentials (as I see them). This points to my personal-evaluation of whether I am flourishing at work, being located betwixt my ongoing assessment of the interactions of both the short- and long-term aspects of activity and the momentary and reflective awareness of my work experience. Thus, I consider that ***how I/we flourish is constructed in the process of sense-making between action in the moment and in reflection/contemplation, a sense-making that is influenced by - and influencing – my/our implicit and explicit views of whether there is meaning to it.***

Importantly this also denotes how my flourishing is constructed and, while socially influenced, is personally led. With connections to constructivism and knowledge creation (the *how I know what I know* and Stacey’s CRP covered in Sub-section 1.3.2.). It suggests to me that I must engage in - be both active and contemplative towards - that process; bringing up the ***carpe diem-carpe vitam motto*** that I use to characterise it. Connecting activity to sense-making and personal-meaning implicates that there is vibrancy or dynamism to this process and its consequence.

The exploration here was one of those unexpected Dionysian-spurs of my inquiry, where an avenue of ideas formed from many different strands.⁹⁶ By looking to grasp *how* we flourish at work, by asking the question of myself and the *Peers* and through my own work experiences, I deepened my understanding of my own flourishing through work. Comprehending that it is within the **interrelated nature of the action (activity) and reflection (awareness) of my work experiences that I construct/order my sense of**

⁹⁶ There was another philosophical diversion where I considered the Aristotelian *vita activa-vita contemplativa axis*, it is covered in Annex 4.3.

workplace flourishing or languishing. This understanding has implications towards how I might approach and configure my own work-life and, I believe, towards organisations too.

Chapter 5. – How can organisations foster human flourishing?

‘Management cannot provide a man with self-respect, or with the respect of his fellows, or with the satisfaction of needs for self-fulfillment. We can create conditions such that he is encouraged and enabled to seek such satisfactions for himself, or we can thwart him by failing to create those conditions.’ (McGregor, 2006, p.54)

In my conversations with colleagues and the *Peers* I often had a desire to talk about my thesis’s ‘practical’ implications for organisations. So, by evoking my notion of workplace flourishing and recollecting the organisational *enrichers* and *diminishers* I’d identified, how could I promote in my OD practice those supportive organisational conditions that McGregor alludes to above?⁹⁷ Thus, matching Laloux’s question (*‘If it turns out that it is possible to create organizations that draw out more of our human potential, then what do such organizations look like?’* (2014, p.4)), what might an *enriching organisation* look like and what organisational approaches would foster it?

Whilst developing this chapter an engaging piece of research on happiness at work was launched by the recruitment company Robert Half. In it, across ten pages, they attractively present *‘the six factors that influence employee happiness’* (2017, p.18). Yet, I noted that these factors and their corresponding organisational implications are, similar with other comparable propositions, actually quite generalised. This is not the fault of the authors, but rather emphasises the challenge that I encountered when trying to put forward such fostering practices. Particularly, that **it is the sheer extensiveness of the potential drivers and elements of workplace flourishing/well-being, touching on all aspects of organisational life, which hinders a *transmuting* of them into specific organisational approaches.** How could something with such a broad and deep range be easily enacted through policies and processes?

It is a *mire* that I have struggled through myself and my exploration of this inquiry question provided different outcomes than I had anticipated. Indeed, as I concentrated on my sphere of work, I realised that there were natural boundaries to my findings or learnings. As such the exploration of this question,

⁹⁷ The purple box in the NEF model.

via investigating my OD practice, eventually looped back toward my own aspirations for organisations; providing cycles of inquiry to refine what was shown in *Figure 1.4*.

The following sections chart those explorations, from integrating earlier findings into my OD practice, through a recognition of characteristics for an *enriching organisation* and its important organisational parameters, to the development of organising principles for it. Finally, I define, as a *personal manifesto*, the kind of organisation that I hope to work for (in both senses); framing what I see are its' core values and virtues.

5.1. – Looking to build *enrichment* in my work practice

I've mentioned above how much of the organisational development work I do with NGOs relies on a facilitated process of organisational self-assessment (OSA); where I strive to engage an organisation's staff into their own organisational change and improvement. In earlier chapters I considered *how* the work I was doing contributed to *my* flourishing or not. Here I return to the URANUS case to further explore my work practice (full case in Annex 4.1.).

The tool I use (Crăciun *et. al.*, *Organisational Viability Toolkit*, 2009) originated from a multi-country NGO support programme that I directed in South East Europe. To date the tool has been expanded to nine countries and has been utilised by around 140 Civil Society Organisations. Through applying the OSA tool CSO staff can assess the performance of their organisation by reviewing it against a list of benchmark statements that cover certain internal organisational capacities and functions (framed as products/processes/practices). Usually a standard assessment comprises around 275 *statements*, but, following a pre-assessment stage, I always tailor them to the individual organisation.

The toolkit clusters the benchmark statements into one of seven core *components*, which encompass most organisational facets and has the benefit of keeping organisational development needs squarely in the frame; the usual entry point for my work (see Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011, p.11). A full list of components and their sub-components is given in Annex 5.1.

While sounding rather technically focussed my approach, via this self-assessment process, actually **relies on promoting and supporting internal dialogue and empowerment in the organisation**. Ensuring that all parties can be heard, involved, and hopefully committed to the developmental steps and changes proposed (the barrier that I came up against at JUPITER). It proffers an approach that parallels others (e.g., James & Hailey, 2007; Kirschbaum, 2004; Lewinsky & Muharemovic, 2011; Taylor & Soal, 2010) and follows the common idea of:

‘OD consultancy, which offers a much more process-oriented approach of facilitating the organisation to diagnose its own problems and develop its own solutions, [which] appears to present a viable alternative to traditional and largely unsuccessful attempts at organisational change.’ (James, 1998, p.3)

To recap, URANUS’s leadership wanted to conduct an organisational capacity assessment to identify what they perceived were *‘bottlenecks, gaps in planning and in strategic-decision-making; as well as other weaknesses in the organisational structures and/or processes that affect URANUS’s impact’* (Melissa, personal communication, October, 2014). It gave me the opportunity to continue my *clinicalesque* research-cycle by incorporating the practice lessons from JUPITER (see Annex 3.2.).

In my initial scoping discussions with URANUS’s middle-managers (December, 2014) I had noted how they seemed largely overwhelmed by the work they had to do. Indeed, I felt **the stresses they raised were potentially hindering individual flourishing**. With both antecedents and consequences given by the staff as examples (overwork, low connectedness or consultation, questions over pay, inequalities of influence, and doubts towards meaningfulness or impact). Several of them directly expressed that they were *“working too much and do too much”*; as one manager said:

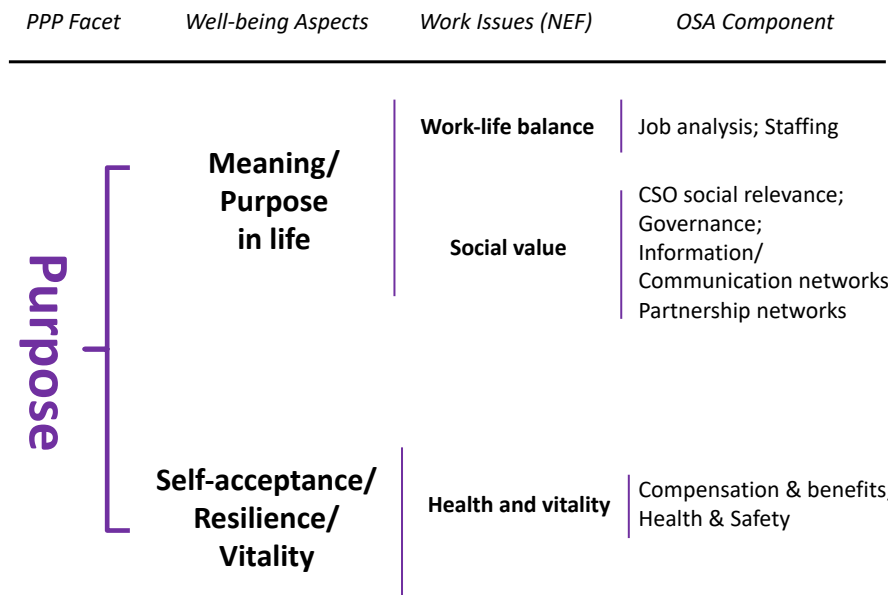
“We are so very broad Robert. [There is a] strong case for working on less issues and having more impact on fewer things. If we were able to narrow down, we would feel more satisfaction on what we are doing and doing it really well.”

While these and other comments represent some of the common NGO capacity issues I see, I thought it both relevant and opportune to assess URANUS’s organisational issues from a workplace flourishing stance. Thus, by incorporating into the OSA Tool the flourishing issues coming out of my inquiry into the statements and components, I wanted to see whether I might open-up a dialogue on workplace flourishing in the organisation. This attempt to **explicitly locate workplace flourishing into my work practice** rather underscores how my belief in the importance of these issues was growing. Although, I was mindful of serving their needs before my own. Recalling Schein’s *clinical inquiry* approach (1995, 2006) and that OD interventions are seen as costly in terms of time, money and effort by most NGOs.

Formulating new statements/components for the OSA meant drawing on the *Peers'* discussions (see Annex 3.3.) and much of the literature reviewed on flourishing/well-being (see Section 3.1., and Annex 3.1.), as well as my thoughts on the work with JUPITER and SATURN. Indeed, a specific outcome of the JUPITER case was my *Apollonian-desire* to **derive and incorporate enriching benchmark statements across appropriate parts of the self-assessment** (or identify and amend others that related to it) and to trial them in one of the cases (see Annex 3.2., on enhancing the OSA process).

Believing that my *PPP Motif* had a strong resonance to those clusters of facets of flourishing I was seeing, I decided to gather my various inspirations under it.⁹⁸ While this might be considered arbitrary, the motif seemingly connects to my own flourishing and I felt that by using it in this way I could contain much of my thesis's learnings. To that end across the three *PPP* elements I compared my various takings from the subjective well-being/human flourishing literature (see Annex 3.1.), the drivers found in the NEF model (Jeffrey *et. al.*, (2014); and the relevant sub-components of the OSA. This working is summarised in the following three figures.

Figure 5.1: Purpose-related



⁹⁸ Somewhat similar to Ballard's (2005) sustainability change factors: *Awareness, Agency and Association*.

Figure 5.2: Place-related

PPP Facet	Well-being Aspects	Work Issues (NEF)	OSA Component
Place	Relatedness/ Positive relationships (personal)	Work relationships	Internal employee relations; Strategic thinking; Programme planning
		Job Design	Job analysis; Structure; Compensation & benefits
	Social (organisational) Integration/ Engagement	Work environment	Health & Safety; Infrastructure
		Positive and negative feelings	Leadership; CSO social relevance; Internal employee relations; Programme assessment; Job analysis
		Management system	Performance management; Leadership; HR management

Figure 5.3: Practice-related

PPP Facet	Well-being Aspects	Work Issues (NEF)	OSA Component
Practice	Personal growth/ Competence/ Environmental mastery	Use of strengths and feeling a sense of progress	Performance management; Job analysis; Training & development; Staffing
		Job design	Structure; Job analysis; Staffing; Performance management; Programme assessment
	Autonomy	Management system	Leadership; Structure; Staffing Leadership; Governance; Structure; Internal employee relations; Financial planning/budgeting; Programme planning/implementation/assessment
		Sense of control	

Originally, I was hoping to **identify statements across the seven self-assessment components** (all 275 questions) that had connotations with the aspects of workplace flourishing I was identifying. This would've required identifying what I considered were the key aspects of workplace flourishing, *enrichers* and *diminishers*, and then assigning them to work related issues as a component in the OSA. While satisfied in an overall sense with the connections made between these different sources and particularly by making my own connections between organisational practices and aspects of flourishing. I was aware that **many of the drivers/issues identified are highly interrelated with one another** and I was somewhat lost with how to formulate the enriching statements.

Meaning, when I sat down to try to put these findings into the organisational self-assessment tool, I felt that they were either rather indistinct or didn't provide the comprehensiveness I believed was required. Indeed, my inquiries through the *Peers'* diaries (see Section 4.2.) and related literature provided me with **both generic organisational areas and some very specific practices with the potential to aid workplace flourishing**. As I mentioned in this chapter's introduction, I realised how these broad and complex flourishing aspects are difficult to contain and convert into something actionable, and consequently specific workplace practices felt *bitty* and incomplete.

Furthermore, because the OSA is meant to prompt consideration of where the subject organisation is in its internal capacities - with the statements written as '*perceived ideal situations*' (Crăciun *et al.*, 2009, p.23) - I found it tricky to *translate* the human flourishing drivers identified earlier into such statements. Additionally, as it relies on the capacity assessment of an organisation in a group setting (unlike most measures related to wellbeing, engagement or human flourishing) this meant that I had to define the enriching/flourishing statements rather differently from the individually-oriented well-being questions I had reviewed. In other words, to do this necessitated that I **propose organisational products, processes, or practices that are potentially supportive of those aspects and conditions that promote human flourishing at work**.

Maybe I shouldn't have aspired to such comprehensiveness anyway. Indeed, I now saw this as an immensely helpful clarifying exploration and, fortuitously perhaps, URANUS's leadership decided to address only two of the seven components of the OSA. So, I was eventually limited to introducing a new sub-component (that I called **Work Enrichment Approaches** (WEA)) to encapsulate those enriching aspects I had identified. The working of the initial *Peer* discussions (Annex 3.3.), using *PPP* as a frame, provided the main subjects for them: **Meaningful work, Living values, Work-life choice, Relatedness,**

Supervisor behaviour, Solidarity, Self-direction, Growth and development, and Subsidiarity. I placed this new sub-component within the OSA's *Strategic Leadership* component.

However, to ensure that they were well-formulated, understandable, and conformed to the spirit and practice of the OSA tool, each of these new statements were reviewed by two *Peers* (Adriana Crăciun, a co-author of the OSA, and Simona Popovici, an advisor on the original tool). The final *Work Enrichment Approaches* sub-component of the OSA, as used with URANUS, is shown in *Figure 5.4*. As an aside, I realise the development and trialling of these is essentially a closed process, with inquiry data and method combined, but telling this tale is the best way I could find to show how this knowledge was produced.

Figure 5.4: Work Enriching statements devised for URANUS's OSA, February 2015

PURPOSE	<p>1). Meaningful work: URANUS's staff regularly reviews together how their activities and achievements are contributing to its overall purpose (mission, vision and goals).</p> <p>2). Living values: URANUS ensures that all policies and structures support and sustain its core values.</p> <p>3). Work-life balance: Work practices are mindful of employee needs; from a 'whole' person perspective (i.e. hours, stress reduction, telecommuting).</p>
PLACE	<p>4). Relatedness: URANUS organises to strengthen co-worker relationships and understanding (i.e. supportive team work, conflict resolution, respectful practices, dialogue, fun).</p> <p>5). Supervisor behaviour: Those managing staff are conscientious in their people management practices; and are expected to: mentor staff, give and receive feedback and build a trusting/positive work environment.</p> <p>6). Solidarity: URANUS looks to provide 'fairness-based' pay, job security and supply decent working conditions.</p>
PRACTICE	<p>7). Subsidiarity: Decision-making in URANUS is set at the (lowest) appropriate level and ensures staff participation.</p> <p>8). Self-direction: Within clear guidelines, and to agreed (achievable) objectives and goals, employees are given maximum latitude in their roles.</p> <p>9). Growth and development: URANUS exhibits a culture of reflection and learning in all activities; and appraisals focus on employee potential.</p>

During our self-assessment workshop, I found that URANUS's staff reacted well to the statements and we had extensive discussions on several of them. Certainly, some of the findings of their self-assessment

indicated a requirement for promoting a more enriching environment. Indeed, many of the points captured were included, in some form, into URANUS's organisational development priorities.⁹⁹

For example, they scored statement one (*Meaningful work*) fairly low and it generated a lively discussion about how they might better connect their daily work to the overall aims of the organisation. It linked with some of the comments made in the pre-assessment and has led to an internal discussion on their strategic impact and effectiveness. I sense this aspect is closely associated with needing a reinforcing sense of purpose, with URANUS's staff seemingly expressing the frustration that they could not see the impact or outcome of what they were working hard to achieve.

Under statement five (*Supervisor behaviour*) for URANUS's programme (campaign) units the managers' supervision was rated as rather weak; which surprised and challenged many of the middle-managers. This finding reinforced my developing view that leadership, and their assumptions on how to manage people, is a crucially important parameter of workplace flourishing. Echoing the *Peers* comments and diary entries about leadership. Later URANUS began to actively pursue capacity improvements in the identified area of middle-management.

On reflection, while developed through a convoluted and perhaps approximate process, I do consider that the *Work Enrichment Approaches* sub-component **represents a fair and broad range of enriching approaches**, which, if followed well, could enhance *enrichment* and reduce *diminishment*. I realise that my clients do not, initially at least, strive to become an *enriching organisation*, but this new sub-component did, to some degree, enable the raising of flourishing related issues. And while my clients are primarily looking to achieve their aims by enhancing organisational effectiveness and efficiency, it is usually in the group discussions where I find that new awareness and commitment for change are developed. It is here where **there is the potential for them to recognise that issues around flourishing or well-being might concern them** (or even exist).

Indeed, it should be noted that as the OSA methodology facilitates a group assessment of organisational processes and practices, it meant that my focus was on organisational enriching approaches and not assessing individual flourishing per se. I believe that potentially this **allows organisational stakeholders to talk about the flourishing aspects of work more easily and with a pragmatic outlook**. It sidesteps a

⁹⁹ N.B., I realise that this might give an impression that the OSA could provide a comparative measure of an organisation's enriching potential. This would be a mistake as the results of these self-assessment processes are the *perception* of a specific group of organisational stakeholders at a particular time; this is not a repeatable or comparable measurement, rather an indicative-discursive support.

delving into individual personal assessments (as done by other measures), which then need summing-up and placing contextually into an organisational whole. I believe that my approach is rather unique and is potentially an important addition to organisational/well-being practice (one of my inquiry's aims). However, I wish to trial them more broadly than I could here. Having opportunities to follow up the discussions that were generated into **conversations with organisational leaders and staff about workplace flourishing**; it's a next step.

For me there is an excitement in this, realising this unique approach and the potential that I had hoped for from my inquiries. Answering a lot of the personal questions I have about my work and giving me options to work how I want to. I find myself replacing the negative with optimism. Claiming back my own position through a 'gentle-activism' that acts towards my 'flourishing agenda'. While knowing there is more work here, I feel engaged to press on with it; it's important, it's possible.

Still, it is worth remembering that it is within the personal experience (the *how* of Chapter 4.) of the *Purpose, Place* and *Practice* aspects at work where people will find workplace flourishing or not. This is not asked in the OSA, as it assesses whether those organisational approaches that might support it are practiced and successful. It means that this is a step removed from the personal experience of flourishing. Providing a reminder that, beyond organisational approaches, **there must be a personal responsibility towards one's workplace flourishing**.

I also realised that to try to extend *enriching* statements across the whole tool and into each sub-component would be too ponderous and might be overly prescriptive. By prescribing how an organisation 'should be' appeared very confining to me.¹⁰⁰ Rather like the differing approaches to democracy, I believe **the approaches of enriching organisations could be quite varied; with surely many potential forms and choices**. So, next I began to inquire more in terms of the overarching character of an *enriching organisation*, being inspired by Cook's '*...underlying principles for a sustainable society...*' (2004, p42).

¹⁰⁰ The OSA publication rather has a compendium that suggests possible practices and approaches (Crăciun *et al.*, 2009, p.68-102).

5.2. – To the character of an *Enriching Organisation*

During one discussion with a friend, Lucie, a university professor, asked me whether there are “*flourishing organisations*” and how I would know whether they are flourishing or not? I answered that I think that although we might speak of organisational flourishing, in terms of success towards organisational goals or purposes, I would resist the idea of an organisation that is presented as flourishing *per se*. Mainly this is because I feel that organisations do not flourish in the way that people do. Instead, I rather see those workplaces, where people can flourish, as enriching organisations. Meaning that **an *enriching organisation* fosters the human flourishing of its staff and stakeholders through the enriching conditions and opportunities it provides.**

She then probed me further, asking, “*whether the network of connections between people in one organisation - as a system - and all their individual flourishing didn’t combine to constitute a flourishing organisation?*” It was a fair point, as we can perhaps speak of flourishing societies; and organisations can be viewed as ‘*micro-societies*’ (Handy, 1999, p.9). This, coupled with my realisations above, challenged me to **think beyond my question of how to foster an *enriching organisation* to what one might actually represent.** What is its essence, what might it stand for? I drew from across my inquiry, my musing-reflections and case work, and from literature (those who have tried to characterise organisations with similar aims), and so this cycle is a summarised *think-piece*. First the literature.

Goffee and Jones, in *Why should anyone work here?* (2015), use the, rather grating, mnemonic of DREAMS to encapsulate their approaches: Difference, Radical honesty, Extra value, Authenticity, Meaning, and Simple rules (p.12). Yet, their six chapter-headings valuably underlined much of what my Peers said and, as main **organisational principles**, I found them resonant with my findings. Whereas Notter and Grant, in *Humanize: how people-centric organizations succeed in a social world* (2012), use what they call a trellis ‘*for creating a more human organization*’ (p.96). With one axis comprising four core human elements of being (*open, trustworthy, generative, and courageous*) which are set against another axis of three organisational aspects (*culture, process, and behaviour*).

I found their summary (2012, p.98) helpful in providing an illustrative way to word and order their ideas, frankly (despite an extensive list of examples) I became disorientated when thinking how to apply them. Still they inspired my realisation that **certain organisational aspects may act as the parameters that flourishing practices must perform within** (more of which I cover in Section 5.3.).

The Progress Principle: Using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work, (2011) by Amabile and Kramer focuses on how organisations can create ‘...conditions that foster positive emotions, strong internal motivation, and favorable perceptions of colleagues and the work itself’ (p.1). Sounds great. In it they expound that *inner work life* – their key to heightened organisational performance and personal satisfaction – revolves around three stand-out supportive events: ‘...progress in meaningful work; catalysts (events that directly help project work); and nourishers (interpersonal events that uplift the people doing the work)’ (p.6). I find them comparable with SDT, and they list (in Figure 4-3, p.85) the key influencers for these events and proposing potential methods. Which, while all valid ideas, I find, as with many approaches, rather combine an **inelegant mix of both broad organisational doctrine and specific practices**.

Entrepreneur Henry Stewart’s *The Happy Manifesto: Make your organization a great workplace* (2013) is rather different than the other ones. He presents a manifesto of ten different maxims based on his own practical experiences (2013, p.136-137), which are matched by pragmatic and tried-and-tested work practices. Those on pre-approval of decisions, openness of information, and self-setting of performance goals I found particularly pertinent. However, what I also found informative was his interpretation of a **management hierarchy of needs** (based on Maslow) **attending to both enrichers and diminishers**. From the bottom his hierarchy is: 1). workplace safety and comfort, 2). reward and communication, 3). support, 4). challenge, 5). trust, and 6). freedom (2013, p.52).

They appear vital to what an enriching organisation might stand for. Plus, I find an echo with corporate sustainability phase models, such as that by Dunphy, Griffiths, and Benn (2007), where:

‘The phases outline a set of distinct steps organisations take in progressing to sustainability. There is a progression from active antagonism, through indifference, to a strong commitment to actively furthering sustainability values, not only within the organisation but within industry and society as a whole.’ (Dunphy et. al., 2007, p.14)

And I had a thought that, in the future, it might be worth defining the phases of organisational sensitivity to human needs.¹⁰¹ Indeed, recalling my experiences with JUPITER, **gauging my client’s assumptions and openness to workplace flourishing is an important practice point**.

¹⁰¹ My tentative *back-of-a-fag-packet* version, adapting Dunphy et. al., (2007, p.14), might be: 1). Aggressive diminishment. 2). Apathy towards staff issues. 3). Compliance with labour laws. 4). Fostering decent work. 5). Creating the exceptional work environment. 6). Being an *Enriching Organisation*.

As related previously, the NEF *Dynamic Model of Well-being* (in *Well-being at Work* (Jeffrey et. al., 2014)), was a useful guide. By following four domains of well-being at work, they describe the main features that impact well-being and give possible implications for employers (see p.16-40). The approach is comprehensive and usefully they provide (p.41-45) a number of key recommendations towards organisational best practice. In my opinion this is the *best-of-the-bunch*. Although I realised how easy it could be for leaders to cherry-pick approaches, meaning that their impact would potentially be diluted. Plus, it misses something on **securing an embracing organisational vision or direction**.

While there are others, the final piece to mention here is that of James O'Toole who, in his book *The Good Life* (2005), devotes a whole chapter to the *Aristotelian Workplace* (p.226-246). I found his vision of workplaces that enable their employees to flourish at work a useful frame for my characterisation of an *enriching organisation*. Furthermore, he presents a number of approaches and applications for such a workplace (p.231-232). Including helpfully setting out four primary *characteristics* that I believe suggest its core personality:

- 'A real opportunity for all workers to learn and to develop their potential
- All employees participate in the decisions that affect their own work
- All employees participate in the financial gains resulting from their own ideas and efforts
- Virtuous leaders' (p.230-231)

The connections from the first of these characteristics to **learning and development, and to meaning-making through personal growth**, should be self-evident from the previous chapters' discussions. As should the second to issues of **self-direction, autonomy, and appropriate participation in decision-making**. The third, for me, has angles that relate to **fairness, trust, solidarity and ensuring relatedness**. The last denotes something of **values and leadership**.¹⁰² Henry Stewart eloquently provides an inspiring organisational vision that combines them:

'Imagine a workplace where people are energized and motivated by being in control of the work they do. Imagine they are trusted and given freedom, within clear guidelines, to decide how to achieve their results. Imagine they are able to get the life balance they want. Imagine they are valued according to the work they do, rather than the number of hours they spend at their desk.' (Stewart, 2013, p.1)¹⁰³

¹⁰² See Verhezen (2010) on integrity.

¹⁰³ I prefer work-life flexibility or choice over balance: '...the terminology should evolve... with employees now seeking "**work-life flexibility**", where an employee controls the amount of time they dedicate to work and life, integrating the two as necessary' (Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2017); also, Ross, Intindola & Boje, 2017.

This passage indicates for me what I would expect *enriching organisations* to whole-heartedly take on. The role of being a potent place for opportunity and development; promoting the space for self-actualisation through growth and development, learning and mastery. These are characteristics that are peppered across most concepts of intrinsic motivation and subjective well-being; and further connect with my *notion of workplace flourishing* and the *Peer identified enrichers*. This confirmed for me that at **the forefront of an *enriching organisation's* nature – its chief characteristic - is its central purpose to enable human flourishing.**

Indeed, I have come to believe that it is through work and in organisations where I – perhaps most of us - mostly engage and interact in society. Thus, coming from a growing conviction that where work *diminishes* us it undermines our rights¹⁰⁴, I now find myself to be somewhat **bemused by an insistence that organisational concerns should override human or societal ones**. Indeed, somewhere along the way I have put that paradigm aside (which is sometimes challenging when I am faced with clients that diminish people for organisational reasons).

An added imperative for me to change my view of organisational purposes has come from the contemporary challenges to careers and working styles. Organisational atavism, labour abundance (Avent, 2017, p.4-8), and the increased automation and advances in artificial intelligence (World Economic Forum, 2016) will, I believe, bring added stresses on people's well-being. It means that **supporting enriching work and building *enriching organisations* are vital for fairer societies and must therefore be at the heart of organisational design and practices.**

Thereby, I would advocate that **surely organisations may have multiple purposes** that are, usually, not mutually exclusive to fostering human flourishing. Indeed, I would expect that such an organisation will require a genuine societal function, alongside its organisational ones, to provide the authenticity of meaning required for flourishing: '*We find life-meaning through activities and roles which give point, direction or simply a kind of vigorous sufficiency-in-itself to the daily business of living*' (Foster, 2008, p.90).

¹⁰⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights: '*Article 23.1 Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Article 23.3 Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection*' (UNO, n.d., my emphasis).

Taking this a bit further I found a certain resonance with McGregor's integration principle '*...which demands that both the organization's and the individual's needs be recognized*' (2006, p.60).¹⁰⁵ It underlines my *Purpose-facets*, for how could I be enriched if I don't identify with what I am doing? To me it indicates that **a flourishing purpose is a natural connector between personal, organisational and social concerns** (connecting to Arendt's *vita activa*, see Annex 4.3.).

However, I would be wary of linking personal and organisational purposes too closely, because as Lawrie notes, quoting psychologist Sandi Mann, people may '*"feel owned by the company and like they are expected to devote their life to it"*' (Lawrie, 2017). And, while O'Toole says that his Aristotelian Organisation '*...does not force its members to participate or to fulfill their potential*' (2005, p.230), I might disagree. For if the purpose of flourishing is *hardwired* into an organisation then there would probably be some expectation that staff engage in their own development (the responsibility mentioned above and in Section 4.3.). If not appropriately applied some might potentially find this oppressive.

Whatever, my characterisation of an *enriching organisation* fundamentally stands on its *enriching purpose* (*an overriding focus on people, with an aim to enrich their lived experience*, as expressed in *Figure 1.4.*). Thus, such **an enriching organisation, where human flourishing is at the heart of its work, would necessarily have to embody the supporting values and virtues of human flourishing within its organising principles**. Indeed, any organising principles, and any associated organisational approaches aimed at fostering workplace flourishing, essentially sprout from this rootstock of an *enriching* organisational purpose.

While this required characteristic might appear obvious it should not be dismissed too easily. I recognised from my work-practice how this flourishing purpose **represents a paradigmatic shift from what organisations are usually seen to be for**. As McGregor powerfully observes, it goes against much of what is commonly understood:

'It is assumed almost without question that organizational requirements take precedence over the needs of individual members. Basically, the employment agreement is that in return for the rewards which are offered, the individual will accept external direction and control. The very idea of integration and self-control is foreign to our way of thinking about the employment relationship. The tendency, therefore, is either to reject it out of hand (as socialistic, or

¹⁰⁵ Mary Parker Follett's 1933 lecture to inaugurate the London School of Economics compares the three ways of settling differences (domination, compromise, and integration), she proposes that only integration involves a change or progress where something new has emerged (McGregor, 2006, p.67).

anarchistic, or inconsistent with human nature) or to twist it unconsciously until it fits existing conceptions.’ (2006, p.69)

Certainly, when explaining my ideas on workplace flourishing to others this *difference* in organisational purpose is the usual stumbling-block to many peoples’ acceptance of them. Even in civil society movements where one might expect more traction for such an idea.

In fact, I am conscious that I have not presented an argument on the organisational benefits of focussing on human flourishing, although I had planned a piece on it and have much evidence for it.¹⁰⁶ But, I realise that I have not researched into workplace flourishing from a conventional efficiency, effectiveness, or financial standpoint. So, let one statement be sufficient: ‘*...raising people’s happiness makes them more productive by between 7% and 12%*’ (Morrison, 2017).

Following on, from these reflections (much walking and working) on the characteristics of an enriching organisation, I sensed that trying to define all the practices of one was rather similar to that of defining sustainability practices. Where there are many potential ways, but not one commonly held view. That similarity also revealed to me that if any part of an organisation’s operation is undermining human flourishing then the whole organisational environment would be tainted. Thus, by solely focussing on finding or defining specific practices or approaches, one could never be certain of **providing the comprehensive attitude across an organisation**. Possibly, as I mentioned above, there would be a tendency to cherry-pick practices, thereby losing the overall sense of them. Rather, I feel, a whole organisational approach will have more promise. It leads to my efforts to **subscribe some organising principles to uphold an enriching character and purpose**.

5.3. – Noting organisational parameters

Towards the end of 2015 I was asked to meet with a human rights NGO – I’ll call it NEPTUNE – that was encouraged by a donor to address their organisational difficulties. After an e-mail exchange, I met with

¹⁰⁶ Amabile & Kramer, 2011, p.3; Atabaki, Dietsch & Sperling, 2015, p.2; Beal *et. al.*, 2016, p.11-12; Burchell & Robin, 2011; Feather & Rauter, 2004, p.91-93; Jeffrey *et. al.*, 2014, p.14; Kilfedder & Litchfield, 2014, p.380-383; Morrison, 2017; Oswald, Proto & Sgroi, 2014; Parsons, Powell & Culpin, 2012, p.5; Robert Half, 2017, p15-16; Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012, p.323; Szita, 2014, p.42; Towers Watson, 2014a & b; and Worrall & Cooper, 2013).

them to find out what they were planning. Understanding that they were primarily interested in putting a performance appraisal system in place, I wanted to delve a little into their managerial approach. *Vignette 8* relates our meetings and my impressions and where the impact of key organisational parameters on workplace flourishing entered my inquiry.

Vignette 8: Sensing the limits (NEPTUNE case, written early-2016)

It was just before Christmas and after misreading my map I arrived a little late and flustered. I was introduced to Carlos, the Director, and Paul, the operating chief. They were very friendly and I was handed a coffee. As we talked I felt that Carlos was somehow restless and kept leaping off subject as things came to him. Paul was more measured, but seemed similarly harassed.

Finally, it was revealed that in two-days Carlos was going off for a three-month sabbatical and that another colleague, Frank, would be acting-Director. I was unsure of Frank when we were introduced, as he came across as very technically focussed, and he only became enthusiastic when his new laptop was delivered during our discussion (they'd had a break-in the previous week). It was unclear to me how he had been selected and why Paul was not given the role as acting-director.

I asked for some background information, such as an organigram - noting many positions unfilled, and people scattered around the world - and they handed me a description of their work and current developments. They mentioned that they wanted to use appraisals for salary discussions, which I believe subsumes the developmental potential of appraisals, but I kept quiet and noted that we might have to come back to purposes at some point. Discussion moved backwards and forwards, and I noted the contradictions between the three of them. After two-hours discussion, with my undrunk coffee cold and realising I needed the toilet, we stopped and I said I'd get back to them with some ideas.

After the meeting I felt almost dizzy from their tangible lack of clarity. I noted how Carlos jumped up a lot, and at one point invited one of the project assistants to join the conversation. He was constantly distracted, and I didn't get a feeling of a durable or focused management. I made a painting after the meeting.

Figure 5.5: The Circus (created late-2015)



It depicts a circus tent sitting in a muddy field that captures my feelings over NEPTUNE's impermanence and lack of lucidity. The energy swirl that I have used in other paintings (see *Figure 6.2.*, below), and notes my presence, flies by overhead and not entering. It brushes past a weather-cock that's throwing out something – perhaps chaos. Although keen to help, my annotations registered my sense of unease.

Straight after the holiday I wrote to Paul to arrange another meeting. Frank was only back in late January and so our meeting was to be in the last week of the month. I felt I needed to get some more clarity on where they were, but I also realised I needed to approach them from their performance appraisal request and not a wider organisational review. So, I took the human resources section from the OSA, selected certain parts, and adapted it from the one I prepared for URANUS. I then asked Paul and Frank to review it. I had not expected it, but they responded by the end of the day with combined scores for where they felt they were. I took this as the next jumping-off point to propose a performance system.

Two-days later, on the way to our next meeting, I had a sudden realisation that I was falling into the trap of starting to prescribe a solution for them. This unsettled me, and I resolved to return to my stance that whatever is done it must be devised with them – more by them – and constructed with room for dialogue and reflection. So, after a check-in, I began by giving them a frank and open framing of where I was. Indeed, the meeting with Peter and Frank was much more focussed and we covered those HR issues they had identified; discussing numerous options. They reacted positively to my suggestion that we see this work as a project of the organisation to co-create their performance system together.

I relate this case here as it points to how my practice was changing. Checking more carefully and orientating around client assumptions, yet sticking to my OD/flourishing principles and looking to prompt organisational dialogue. I also looked further into issues around performance appraisal and performance management, it **led me to question how such processes, and others, would look like in my enriching organisation.**

Actually, the desire for a performance appraisal system or process is commonly raised in the organisational assessments I do. Yet performance management and associated performance evaluation is tricky, often with unintended outcomes (Taylor & Soal, 2010, p.326-328), and I find that in many NGOs they are often done piecemeal. Considering this, and how connected performance relations and processes seemed to be to both the *enrichers* and *diminishers* identified with the *Peers*, my work with NEPTUNE showed this as a potentially important organisational parameter.

There are many critiques of performance appraisals and, as Handy notes, appraisal schemes are particularly difficult to get right (1999, p.225). One of the reasons he gives, echoing Douglas McGregor (2006, p.37), is that: *'The traditional appraisal procedure is not ... very effective, ... because the superior is expected to be, at the same time, judge and counsellor. This form of role conflict is unacceptable...'* (1999, p.227).

Of course, many suggestions to improve this situation have been made (e.g. Buckingham & Goodall, 2015, p.43-48, Goffee & Jones, 2015, p.155; Handy, 1999, p.227), but I don't have the space to cover them here. However, while working with NEPTUNE and considering how my *enriching organisation*

might frame performance management, I spoke with another colleague, David Peach; who is a human resources specialist. His words brought a lot of clarity:

'My view has always been that regular quarterly meetings are far more valuable than an annual appraisal. ... So, keep a formal schedule of one-to-one meetings with formal goal setting and progress reports against objectives but ensure that these are discussed regularly with one-to-ones.... Also, people have started using counsellors - almost like having an internal mentor or coach who can mediate during appraisal meetings... So, in summary I think internal coaches and counsellors, a feedback mechanism and no ratings - just feedback that is clear and concise about successes and failures with clear objectives for the future.' (D., Peach, personal communication, December 15, 2015)

In a flourishing-focussed organisation, I saw, to embed personal learning in it, there should be a change from a performance to a **development appraisal** or **purpose review** (see Cable, 2018, p.77). It indicates a change in a supervisor's approach to one of mentoring and guiding. And raised, connected to my fresh experience with NEPTUNE, another parameter to explore: leadership.

Many years ago, feels like a life-time, the organisation I worked in hired a new executive director. This director, she's mentioned in some earlier *vignettes*, proceeded to develop the management team and the organisation in her own image. In Sub-section 1.2.1., I briefly mentioned a discussion about how the management team, and therefore ultimately the organisation would be structured. On the table we were sat around were four diagrams of organisational decision-making and co-ordination structures. Before anyone could speak, our director placed her finger on the diagram where everyone reported to a central co-ordinating position; showing communication as a series of radial lines like spokes on a cartwheel. She determinedly said: *"This is the way I want us to be organised"*. I looked at a colleague across the table and he raised his eyebrows with a look of *'bloody hell'* on his face; discussion over...

Kilfedder and Litchfield reveal: *'The quality of leadership and people management in an organization is often one of the key determinants of the employee experience at work and thereby their health and wellbeing'* (2014, p.367). Indeed, the weight of experiential and written evidence of the negative effects of poor management and leadership practices is overwhelming (e.g.: Allen, 2014; Comiteau, 2014; Gallup, 2013; Robertson & Barling, 2014). Consequently, I relate this story because I think that **it is pointless to promote a flourishing environment, and the structures and processes that support it, if the leadership of an organisation hold assumptions that are against it.**

I've related how Daniel, the leader of JUPITER (Section 3.2.), was unwilling to release his control and resisted the change that seemed necessary. While, *Peer* member, Laura's view was that any leader's

approach impacts across a whole organisation. For her, where there is dysfunction coming from the leadership it causes entropy and is represented as an underlying narrative. However, while acknowledging the recurring and popularly characterised *toxic leadership* experience for many at work, at different times in the same organisation I did experience very different leadership behaviours. It means **there is a choice being made somewhere about what is organisationally acceptable**. Gini's view is stark:

'...the primary imperative of every organization is to succeed. This logic of performance leads to the creation of a private moral universe. A moral universe that by definition is totalitarian (self-ruled), solipsistic (self-defined) and narcissistic (self-centered). Within such a milieu truth is socially defined and moral behaviour is determined solely by organizational needs.' (1998, p. 713, my emphasis)

Although I don't think succeeding is necessarily bad and there are other issues at play, such as how work is organised. But surely the expression of truth, values, and moral behaviour are influenced by a leader's personal character and abilities. Thus, when looking to promote change or foster flourishing, **leader assumptions** become the critical caveat in the organisations I work with. Laloux says this is the key condition for his *Integral or Evolutionary-Teal organisation* (2014, p.238), explaining:

'What determines which stage an organization operates from? It is the stage through which its leadership tends to look at the world. Consciously or unconsciously, leaders put in place organizational structures, practices, and cultures that make sense to them, that correspond to their way of dealing with the world. ... This means that an organization cannot evolve beyond its leadership's stage of development. The practice of defining a set of shared values and a mission statement provides a good illustration.' (Laloux, 2014, p.41, my emphasis)

For me it shows that **the key indicator of a leaderships' stance is how an organisation actually frames and enacts, on an ongoing and everyday basis, its organisational values** (highlighted in my *Peer* discussions). While noting that '*...fewer than 20% of leaders have a strong sense of their own individual purpose*' (Craig & Snook, 2014, p.4), it is thus important that **leaders, managers and supervisors would value the enriching purpose** proposed above. This raises an important issue that perhaps workplace flourishing requires a *virtuous leadership*:

'In this view, virtuous business leaders serve not to make themselves rich, famous, adored, or powerful but to provide society with the goods and services it needs in an economically efficient manner while at the same time providing the environment for the intellectual and moral development of employees. Like Aristotle's political leaders, their task is to make "the good" of the company commensurate with the good of its employees; in fact, to make the two mutually reinforcing.' (O'Toole, 2005, p.230)

I subscribe to O'Toole's view, it comes from my CSO background, although after efficient I would add '*and sustainable*' and I would also be careful of not monetising "the good" and highlight the social good too. However, virtue is perhaps an alien, unfashionable, or overly demanding concept; even smacking of piety. Still, I believe, we might aspire to an overarching ethical framework in our workplaces¹⁰⁷ - and especially in CSOs/NGOs - and, while O'Toole's questions to his *Aristotelian* manager are challenging (2005, p.242), it is seemingly the way for a leader to flourish too:¹⁰⁸

'Because no one wishes to be treated unjustly himself, Aristotle suggests that a virtuous leader start by putting himself in the place of his followers, asking 'How would I want to be treated if I were a subject of this state?' Next, Aristotle asserts the priority of the welfare of the whole community over the interests of its individual members. So the second question a virtuous leader asks is, 'What form of social contract would allow all members of our community to develop their potential in order that they each may make their greatest contribution to the good of the whole?'" (2005, p226)

He further highlights several leadership issues that were raised across my inquiry. Firstly, that managers should not be a sort of *nanny*, but must promote a **place of opportunity and development**. Secondly, that there is a form of **virtuous decision-making** at the heart of it.¹⁰⁹ Thirdly, leaders look to the welfare of the many, not themselves, and that determines some sort of **community responsibility** where the employee has both rights and responsibilities towards the community.

In terms of management practices there are many (such as those seen in the references in this chapter), but it is rather within a **managers' values** perhaps where the challenge lies. It was from here that I realised that **the main way for any organisation (represented by the people that are part of it) to foster human flourishing is that they have to want to**. I'll now move on to the third key parameter I identified.

As I worked with URANUS there was a collective realisation that somehow the organisational structure wasn't serving the staff to design and deliver the work as they wanted. I felt that there was a mismatch between how they spoke about their organisational structure (their organigram was drawn horizontally) and how it was in terms of functionality. I kept being told that they had a "*flat structure*", but realised that it was actually quite traditional and based on a hierarchy of responsibility.

¹⁰⁷ See Sachs, (2013), *Restoring virtue ethics in the quest for happiness*. Sachs quotes the '*principle of humanity*' and the four basic values identified in the *Global Economic Ethic* (2009) (Sachs, 2013, p.93).

¹⁰⁸ There is an excellent overview of issues in: Worrall & Cooper, (2013), *The quality of working life 2012: Managers' Wellbeing, Motivation and Productivity*.

¹⁰⁹ Cook provides a challenging list of questions of practice for decision makers (2004, p59-60).

I re-drew it for them as a standard pyramid. By doing so it revealed that much of the organisation's stresses originated from them acting as if they had a horizontal structure, but they were operating within an incomplete hierarchy. The downsides of this was two-fold: First the organisation demonstrated some of the negative aspects of a hierarchical structure, yet without embracing the benefits; and secondly, their processes for co-ordination and decision-making didn't follow this hierarchy, thus causing dysfunction.

Further considering the effect of structure, I engaged with Laloux's suggestion that **organisational structures, or processes, have to be appropriate to the culture, behaviour and mind-sets that one wishes to foster** (2014, p.227). Talking of the *Pluralistic-Green (Post Modern)* organisation¹¹⁰ (which perhaps approximates to many NGOs) he believes that, while *Pluralistic-Green* have been able to bring to the fore aspects of empowerment, values as drivers and a stakeholder focus, they are still reliant on the structure processes and practices of other organisational forms. Consequently, this acts as a constant drag on the way people work:

'Green's breakthrough is to bring attention to the inner dimensions of mindsets and culture, but often... Green Organizations tend to focus so much on culture that they neglect to rethink structure, processes, and practices.' (2014, p.229, my emphasis)

He goes on to say: *'Hierarchical structures with non-hierarchical cultures – it's easy to see that the two go together like oil and water. That is why leaders in these companies insist that culture needs constant attention and continuous investment'* (2014, p.219).¹¹¹ I had discussed structure and culture with some of the *Peers*, particularly with Andreas:

"Yeah one of the reasons is to soften some of the negative effects of structure. We need structure to have us work together to do things. Need supervisors, when we have questions or concerns. We also need accountability. So, need structure of that kind, but at the same time we need people to engage and work together. This is why we want to blur these lines, why we look at culture and put much work there." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 19, 2015)

I believe **appropriate structure to be a crucially important parameter** of an enriching organisation.

Indeed, Jeffrey *et. al.*, (2014) appear to support this conclusion when they note the need for *'...creating*

¹¹⁰ And goes beyond the standard *Achievement-Orange (Modernist)* or *Conformist-Amber (Newtonian)* types evinced in most companies and organisations. See Laloux (2014) Chapter 1.1 for a full exploration of these.

¹¹¹ Handy supports him: *'... many of the ills of organizations stem from imposing an inappropriate structure on a particular culture, or from expecting a particular culture to thrive in an inappropriate climate'* (1999, p.180-181).

an organisational structure that enables employees to flourish and take pride in what they do...' (p.15).

Helpfully Laloux brings structure into concert with the other parameters discussed above:

'There is a common belief in organizational development circles that if we could only get leaders to be more enlightened, all would be well. That notion is too simplistic; enlightened leaders don't automatically make for enlightened organizations, unless they also embrace structures, practices, and cultures that change how power is held, how people can show up, and how the organization's purpose can express itself.' (2014, p.257, my emphasis)

He frames what I noticed from my various client cases: that **an organisation's structures, leadership/management, policies and processes are key parameters for how an organisation actually is**. Although each is different in its influence, the three parameters I was usually contending with in my cases were: **organisational structures, performance management processes, and leadership values**. In terms of flourishing they are the *super-clusters for enrichment or diminishment*.

Thus, I became convinced that a necessary gearing of *processes-structure-culture* is required when fostering an *enriching* organisational environment. I explored in detail these three areas, drawing influence from the cases, relevant literature and the *Peer* discussions/diaries. Through that, I have roughed-out the characteristics I believe such organisational parameters might exhibit in an *enriching organisation* (presented in Annex 5.2.). Certainly, they are imprecise and subjective, but were a necessary exercise for me (from Dionysus to Apollo) to further define my position and adding to *Figure 1.4*.

5.4. – Organising principles as a *personal manifesto*

In *Well-being at Work* (Jeffrey et. al., 2014) the authors present an engaging organisational vision that I believe encapsulates much of what my *enriching organisation* might try to do:

'Improving well-being at work implies a more rounded approach which focuses on enabling employees to maximise their personal resources (in particular, with reference to creating a good work-life balance); creating an organisational structure that enables employees to flourish and take pride in what they do; supporting people to function to the best of their abilities, both as individuals and in collaboration with their colleagues; and producing a positive overall experience of work.' (p.15, my emphasis)

Certainly, one of my aims for this thesis has been to put forward a compelling vision for workplace flourishing and *enriching organisations* so that others might engage with it and take it further. In doing so I evoke how Sir Thomas More (1516) expounded on his ideas for the perfect society by proposing a fictional country, *Utopia*, as a prompt for discussion. And although realising that *utopia* means ‘no-place’ in Greek (them again), its etymological kin *eutopia* - which More also refers to and makes an elegant link to *eudaimonia* - means a ‘good-place’. It is the thing that I am striving for through my work, *organisational good-places*. Here I look to expose, as a similar prompt, some of my concluding ideas about putting human flourishing at the heart of organisations.

In late-2016 I visited an NGO as a part of my work for a grant-giver (MARS). I was intrigued when its’ director told me that they have a “*Wellbeing at Work Working Group*”. Kindly she shared the plans on their identified well-being areas. On reviewing them I saw that the majority of the issues they had identified were cosmetic office conditions¹¹², and those that had perhaps more promise (working time flexibility; working out-of-office; training; and social programmes) didn’t have any planned actions. It presented the sort of piecemeal approach that I feared might result from incoherently raising well-being or flourishing issues with my clients.

This experience reinforced my realisation that for *enriching approaches* to be comprehensibly engaged with it would require the profound **recalibration of the general view of organisational purposes by organisational leaders and staff**. Thus, I felt, following my exploration into the drivers and conditions of workplace flourishing (*enrichers*, *diminishers*, and parameters), that ultimately the working out of appropriate approaches and the application of them should be directed by that purpose. However, I began to recognise, prior to designing and developing of any *enriching approaches*, that this **overall enriching purpose needed expanding upon**. Indeed, by bringing together a more-or-less coherent **set of guiding or organising principles**, that I might be able to use them in my practice to work with leaders and staff when planning their organisational approaches.

Boggis and Trafford state that: ‘*Operating principles reflect conscious choices*’ (2013, p.2), and each principle ‘...*defines how the leadership expects the organisation to operate in the future and provides guidance on how everyone can contribute through the decisions they make and actions they take*’ (2013, p.2). Thus, when formulating some *enriching* organising principles, I tried to phrase them with clear

¹¹² E.g. Reduce the paperwork and improve “dynamic orderliness” in the office; make an inventory of needed equipment (computers, desks, chairs, cupboards, etc.); and re-organisation of the social areas (Kitchen/Social room/dishwasher).

implications towards the way an organisation operates, by: covering the whole gamut of flourishing aspects (addressing *enrichers*, *diminishers* and the key parameters), being widely applicable at all organisational levels, and helping to facilitate organisational decisions.

The OSA statements (Section 5.1.) - as they are linked to my workplace flourishing notion defined through the inquiry, connect to my *PPP Motif* and had been used in my OD-practice - provided a good starting place (Meaningful work, Living values, Work-life choice, Relatedness, Supervisor behaviour, Solidarity, Self-direction, Growth and development, and Subsidiarity). The following organising principles, emerging from my inquiry deliberations, represent one sum of my working (*Figure 5.6.*).

Figure 5.6: Organising principles for an enriching organisation

Purpose-Principle: *We have an overriding focus on people, with an aim to enrich their lived experience, thereby contributing to societal betterment.*

- To ensure that organisational achievements are authentic, meaningful, visible, and valuable towards overarching purposes - *All individual and organisational work goals are framed towards and evaluated against personal and social betterment outcomes.*
- To ensure that our espoused organisational values and integrity are followed - *All organisational behaviours and practices can be assessed against stated organisational values (via internal and external checks and balances).*
- To reduce work stress, sustain healthy lives, serve individual life-style needs, and support the achievement of external goals, the organisation is flexible towards and proactive in promoting employee work-life flexibility - *All staff define and negotiate their working commitments and conditions against organisational needs.*

Place-Principle: *We strive to engender a work environment where staff self-actualisation and community are combined.*

- To gain a team-focus, share personal experiences, reduce conflict/rumours, and build community connections - *All organisational activities are designed around an organisational citizenship ideal; encouraging staff connectedness and trust.*
- To promote trust, open/ongoing feedback, and dialogue - *All supervision is approached with a supportive and accessible stance, and with a transformational focus (to assist, mentor, and inspire).*
- To ensure there is fairness and equity in remuneration, benefits, employment rights/security, and working environment - *All organisational conditions are founded on the basis of community solidarity and individual dignity.*

Practice-Principle: *We operate through employing organisational processes, procedures, and practices that enrich the work experience and by removing those that diminish it.*

- To support choice, autonomy, and control in work - *All decisions are transparent and made at the lowest appropriate level with the suitable participation of those concerned.*
- To promote self-direction and goal attainment - *All positions and tasks are jointly defined (employee, team, leaders), with realistic: aims, objectives, variety, and scope.*
- To support personal and group development and growth - *All organisational approaches facilitate reflection and learning opportunities in their design and functioning.*

I am conscious that they are a very first attempt and only serve as a point of departure for further discussion of my organisational *eutopia*. Certainly, I am cautious with any claims toward their application. Still, working with these in the future will offer a chance for refinement and would also

reveal contradictions and how applicable or sufficient they are. Indeed, already when developing them, I sensed that **all would have to be applied to have the desired impact towards workplace flourishing**, thereby avoiding a piecemeal or incoherent approach. Furthermore, I note that, as these principles are focussed on organisational design and doctrine, there is also **a need to recall the individual's responsibility for their own flourishing**.

I see much of my hopes for my work in here. I feel how, more than the practice outcomes and the approaches explored, I have crystallised and better defined the central positions of my personal manifesto towards workplace flourishing. In other words, while I know these nascent principles require more thought and inquiry, they reveal to me those key organisational values that I yearn to see in my work. And, as I aspire to promote them, as well as a professional check-list or tests, they define so much of my personal aspirations for what I do. Bringing to life the meaning and purposes of my career, revealing that my own work-flourishing pathway is about fostering such organisational 'eutopias.'

Chapter 6. – Bringing the parts together

‘Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.’
(Aristotle, 2009, p.3)

I have tried to story my inquiry from its origins, to its evolving methods, and on to the various ways that I explored my three inquiry questions. Now I’ve done that exploring it’s now opportune to reflect back on the different strands of my thesis and start to bring the parts together. As such, its useful to view this, presented over the next two chapters, by recalling my two inquiry focuses (see Section 1.4.). That personal desire to understand and deepen my own flourishing through work and my wish to illuminate the organisational and societal implications from an emphasis on workplace flourishing.

From these inquiries I’m able to advance a number of findings or reflections. I can easily point to the constructed, yet somewhat propositional, ones, such as: my ***notion of workplace flourishing***, the ***new component of my OSA tool***, and the ***organising principles (or tests) of an enriching organisation***. All useful for me, but they represent only a part of my inquiry’s outcomes. For there were ***my own realisations about my changing position*** that I should give voice to.

Indeed, I’ve realised that different *forms of knowing* have led to these different *forms of knowledge*: the more-conventional notions and schemes, and the less-conventional understandings and realisations for me. I also recognise that, in the bringing together of much of my explorations here, these forms of knowledge must, perhaps unusually, mingle in their presentation.

6.1. – Reflecting on My Purpose, Place, and Practice

‘Comprehensive accounts of psychological well-being need also to probe people's sense of whether their lives have purpose, whether they are realizing their given potential, what is the quality of their ties to others, and if they feel in charge of their own lives.’ (Riff & Keyes, 1995, p.725, my emphasis)

You'll perhaps recall in Chapter 1., that I presented the origins of my *PPP Motif*, and how it seemed to encapsulate much of my work motivation and meaning (see *Figure 1.1.*). I speculated that it was within *PPP* that my own experience of workplace flourishing might be constructed. Exploring with it and into it as a research *device* appeared helpful in bringing together both my inquiry and work practice. Giving direction to my inquiry questions, and acting as a *membrane* for filtering my reflections and to view the *data* coming out of the inquiry

In this section I look to do just that, drawing from the inquiry and its findings to express and crystallise my thoughts. Reflecting how the *PPP* aspects were further defined and could be combined with other findings. It condenses much of my thinking and, for what it's worth, it's my contribution to theory; that *‘...handmaid of professional concentration’* (Cawkwell, 1972, p.36). You may find there is some repetition from what is above, but I want to ensure that what I share was clear for others (and myself).

6.1.1. – To a new understanding

As I inquired and as I considered my own work, I realised that I found myself thinking about how the work I was doing was related, or not, to my three *PPP* facets. I wondered how my *notion of workplace flourishing* (developed with the help of the *Peers* and shown in Section 3.3.) might link with them, and whether this would help me to further bring definition to both. In doing so it meant thinking about what each part of it represented. This gave me new understanding and importantly allowed me to cluster the organisational supports or needs, that come from my inquiries, under each (defining features of both the *Work Enriching Areas* of my OSA and organising principles of an enriching organisation (Chapter 5.)).

Finding purpose

I best start with the facet of *Purpose*. Indeed, I've found that in the literature I've covered work-purpose and meaning is highlighted regularly (Amabile & Kramer, 2011, p.94-96; Cable, 2018, p137-173; Goffee & Jones, 2015, p.121-145; Senge, 1990, p.192-215). It seems an obvious area to explore, as surely I flourish when I am about my own: life-purpose, '*life-theme*', or '*authentic project*' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.230-231).

As I spoke with my *Peer Group*, most of whom work in the civil society field, many referred to a mission or a purpose bigger than themselves. Indeed, we all considered that we want to *do something meaningful*, and yet recognised how that purpose changes for us over time. Mark told me an intriguing story (strangely resonant to my own) of how he found what is his underlying professional purpose; a *realisation point*. It was when he completed his MBA, and he looked to decide where he should put his efforts (he was working primarily with development organisations). He thought to look to work with large corporates on CSR¹¹³ issues, but felt unsure and considered starting his own business; doing part NGO work and part building public-private partnerships. He talked with a colleague and, while opining that were no wrong answers, she helped him to realise that the options "*...all end at the same point - social change.*" The key advice she gave was:

"Figure out the type of people you want to work with. Worked [your] whole career with NGOs, Nestlé might not be the best place to go. Go where you will be inspired and get the best chance to find satisfying work." (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

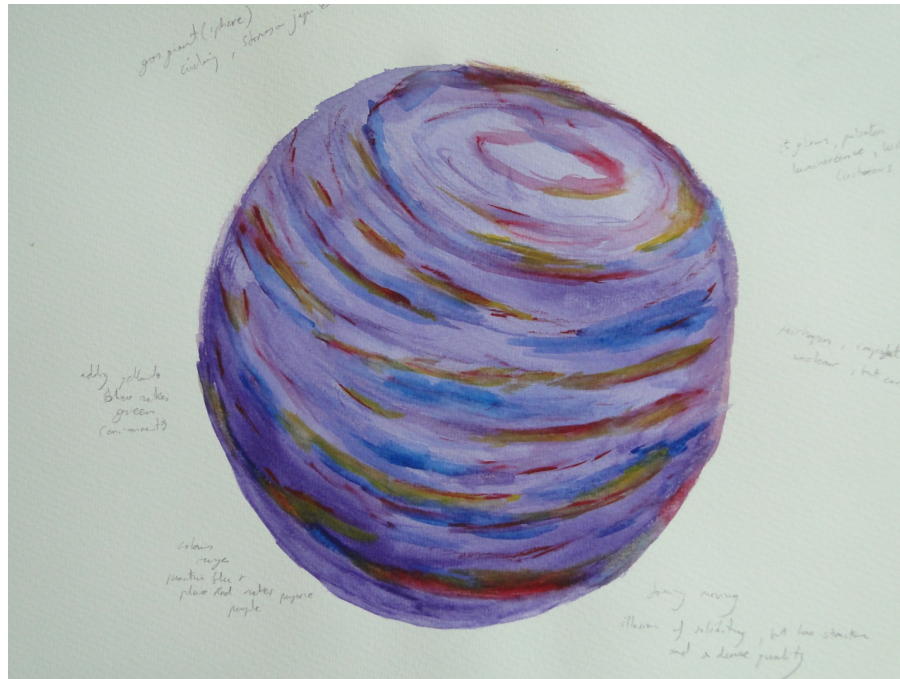
For me this indicates, if I want to flourish in an organisational setting then, **I must be able to position the organisational mission or purpose with my own**. However, beyond generalities, it's difficult to articulate or express what my purpose is. Indeed, when I wrote out my work purposes at the beginning of my inquiry (see *Figure 1.1.*) I became conscious of how easy it was to fall into platitudes. Settling on: '*contributing to society, being supportive of positive social change, doing good/meaningful work, and pursuing continuous personal development*'. While I would still ascribe to them overall, honestly, don't they sound like all the usual mission statements? Seemingly obscuring their vitality and what they signify for me inside.

I felt I needed to get beyond such propositional thoughts, to reflect on something of the *dynamic* behind these statements. So, following my inquiry methods, early on as I looked to define my inquiry further I

¹¹³ Corporate Social Responsibility.

tried to capture the *sense* of my purpose in a painting. After some false starts, I eventually settled on a spherical, ethereal, even spiritual, planet-like form to represent my *Purpose* (see Figure 6.1.).

Figure 6.1: Purpose Sphere: (Created September 2013):



I observed in it a feeling of rotation and change, although I also sensed that it was dense despite this fluidity. It became mostly mysterious-purple, but streaked and mingling with other colours, and I annotated the painting after I finished. Through painting it I realised that my want for meaning, and a striving for a purpose, seemed both evolutionary and conditional. I talked about it with my doctoral colleagues and they noted a “*magical quality*” and a “*sense of purity*” to it. I pondered on these qualities.

Seemingly while **purpose represents something that I value** (noting Haybron, 2013, p.10), it changes and is constructed through my experiences as I develop. This perception, implied from my image and *Peer* conversations, that purpose is constructed and is never fixed, with multiple-purposes that I might conceive of, connotes with others’ views.

The American-Hungarian psychologist and author of flow-theory, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi does not believe in a single ultimate, goal-bound truth, meaning or purpose, rather of a **bringing together of our purpose and activity** so ‘...the result is that harmony is brought to consciousness’ (2002, p.217). As Amabile and Kramer put it:

'To be meaningful, your work doesn't have to have profound importance to society - ... What matters is whether you perceive your work as contributing value to something or someone who matters (even your team, yourself, or your family).'' (2011, p.95-96)

Interestingly, Csikszentmihalyi points to the need for the construction, or appreciation, of a meta-narrative to life, where there is a unifying purpose to it and where *'...people manage to join all experience into a meaningful pattern'* (2002, p.7). For me this then **locates my purpose within the positive ordering or sense-making of my flourishing** (discussed in Section 4.3.).

Lips-Wiersma and Morris, authors of *The Map of Meaning* (2011), assert: *'...we do not refer to one ultimate purpose for our working life, precisely because we have found that there are many pathways that have purpose'* (p.6). That echoes strongly with the *realisation* evident from Mark's experience and my other co-inquirers (Annex 3.3.). Indeed, each of us pointed to one or several experiences that have defined or given pattern to our understanding of our work and careers. Maybe you have them yourself?

This insight was important to me, as I recognised in myself a fear of failing to find or fulfil my purposes within a paradigm of the great work, calling or edifice (although that might encompass it for others). But, by recognising that **potentially there are multiple purposes** the notion of one fulfilling destiny or a life-defining legacy rather evaporates into anti-climax (see Section 7.3.). As a result of these ideas I've begun to believe that perhaps **defining my purpose - a personal idiom constantly-constructing itself - is the ongoing work of my life**. It is there, in my perceived success towards that, that I sense whether I am flourishing or not.

If all this sounds a bit stiff and serious (and it is) I gained another subtle addition to my view of purpose. Paul Dolan's (2014) position is that happiness - which he equates with flourishing - is supported by events that provide either *pleasure* or *purpose*. This **pleasure-purpose axis** crystallised for me during my final work with JUPITER in early-2015, where I began to wonder why I kept doing the work if it was troubling me so much. At first, I thought perhaps I was just being stubborn to see it through or it was about getting paid, but that didn't appear right. *Vignette 9.*, comes from my notes.

Vignette 9: Endgame (JUPITER case, written early-2015)

There it is Naomi will leave at the end of the project. Nothing is in place or being carried out [from the organisational development plan]. In terms of change work this feels really useless. Nothing really built, a few sparks here and there, glimmers and rainbows, but, in-the-end, it goes nowhere.

I spent my last evening with Naomi and Derek, an old friend from former work days. He told me of how his organisation was slowly dying and how he has three jobs to make ends meet, leaving him no time with his family. Naomi spilled her feelings on the endgame at JUPITER. She's surprised and hurting, but at least she can now plan and move on.

We talked together for hours, ordered too much food, had a few too many beers and we laughed out loud. It was a bit of a wake, but also a bonding and a shedding of fears. Life goes on, we are bruised but whole. If I'd paint this feeling I'd present a bland landscape with a winter sun rising-up, pale yellow, wan, little warmth, melancholic.

Now I am heading out. I'm at the airport café reading Dolan. He gives another perspective to work, and that is the pleasure part. I realise, despite the outcomes, there had been quite some fun too. I got to work again with Naomi, got to know some really lovely people, treasured the country and the travels. Even with the bloody early/late flights, dashing to connections, and queuing for visas.

Yet despite the company of friends last night, I still have a sense of failure. I buy another coffee and consider that for me at least the pleasure of this work doesn't suffice to replace the lost-purposes of it. It's a faux-sensation for this piece, it says something to the failure of my ongoing practice? Then a cover of an old Eurythmics' song begins playing - Sweet Dreams. I start to mouth the words, the waitress standing next to me by the bar quietly sings along. I smile to myself, drink some more coffee, think to myself '*hey it's okay*', and reach for my notebook ... [and write this].

From this experience I understood how, even though the work was disappointing from a professional purpose-perspective, there was certainly a tangible amount of enjoyment and fun that helped to sustain me. And, while the pleasure I found didn't completely suffice in replacing my *Purpose*-needs, the

camaraderie with the NGO staff, the opportunity to travel, try new stuff, and simply the variety it brought to my work was important. This understanding has allowed me to **reconnect pleasure and happiness** into my view of work; and not feel guilty about it.

Three work-related clusters of **Purpose-needs** emerged from my inquiry: *Meaningful-work*, *Living values*, and *Work-life flexibility/choice*:

Meaningful work: I saw how my work-purposes were defined either through a task's momentary meaningfulness or in a longer-term sense. Although, where I and the *Peers* could *conceive* of a sense of purpose, we rather focussed on the latter; usually linked to career *realisation points*. As indicated earlier, **the developmental journey of identifying and refining what was meaningful to me was actually a huge part of the sensation of my workplace flourishing**. In other words, **I flourish as I go along, but only as long as I feel I am in the process of understanding and/or forming some meaning from my work**. Conversely, **I feel diminished at work when I am stymied in that journey to discover or deepen my purposes and meaning** (the seeking or finding-out is suppressed). This **continuous ordering is perhaps the meta-narrative to my inquiry outcomes**.

Daniel Cable, a professor of organisational behaviour, writes: '*If we choose more meaningful stories about our work based on personal experience and interpretations of our impact, we can light up our seeking systems and change our motivation, perseverance, and resilience in the face of adversity*' (2018, p.164-165). His reflections underscore how, beyond organisational conditions, my workplace flourishing is also contingent on my efforts; within the moment and an overall assessment.

It also helps to explain why, even in difficult work situations, I could sustain a sense of purpose within the act of the struggle. So, even while not fully flourishing (perversely some of my best work was done in *diminishing* situations), my work still contributed to my meaning-making. I now ask myself, as I engage with clients and develop work projects, how it relates to my aspirations; where I think it takes me, what consequence is there in it? To others, I'd say **do explore your own story and look for work that sustains you in your developmental journey**; work that engages and connects you.

Living values: One of the *Peers*, Nicholas, showed how even in the CSO sector there were no guarantees to find an organisational context for purpose. The working practices of his workplace were actually diminishing of people:

"I cannot say I am over excited in the job here. Sometimes I am counting the days of the week, on the other hand it pays. Sometimes I am thinking is that really enough? ... I am very much under-utilised, I think I could [be] much more. ... I am not involved in important decision-making, which impacts in my area of work. I don't like the working atmosphere..." (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

The result of an inauthentic approach, particularly within my field, seemingly undermines personal meaning-making. During the *Peer* conversations there were several suggestions about how organisations might ensure that they embed their espoused values into how they operate. Andreas, an NGO-leader, talked in a practical way about how they had developed a set of behaviours which encapsulate their values and way of working. He told me how these behaviours are really living expressions of their organisational values.

However, it seems to me that any organisation's values must ultimately be connected with the **leaderships' values and assumptions** (covered in Section 5.3., and below), which ultimately relates to a leader's personal virtue. As Daniel Haybron writes: *'...there seem to be at least two fundamental parts to a good life: whether your life is good for you, and whether the way you lead it is good. Well-being, and virtue'* (2013, p.110). Indeed, it seems to me that there is, what one has described, a *'...necessity of moral rectitude for the good life...'* so that *'...a certain sort of moral failure might make a good life impossible...'* (Becker, 1992, p.26). In recalling several of my case studies, I believe that I cannot authentically flourish if I do so by diminishing others.

It led me to this second *Purpose*-need, one where I feel **I must recognise and ensure the integrity of my values in my work/workplaces**. Identifying mine within the idea of flourishing has clarified by engaging in my inquiry. To others I'd say, take care, as I do, that where you work (and who you work with) has **values that you can abide and follow**.

I know to my cost that such conditions can become unbearable or requires serious tempering of the soul (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Working in an inauthentic organisation or against your values is *attritional*. Are you ready to do that and to challenge those aberrations where you can? I'd also say that we also need to ensure we are truly fair to others (and that's a tough act).

Work-life flexibility/choice: My *Peers* usually expressed a dissatisfaction with work-life balance by relating it to work overload or deleterious organisational conditions. Kate said: *'I could just feel myself getting old in the job, never felt that before. I felt that there has to be more to life than doing this five days a week...'* (Kate, personal communication, June 27, 2014). While Liz spoke of when she worked in a

company where work-time rules were never properly implemented by management. Eventually the prevailing work culture and excessive expectations started to impact on her work performance, leading her to questioning the point of it all.

However, I feel that much of our work-life discussions evolved mainly from **personal work-life choices**. Where we spoke in terms of what we wanted to do or valued and what we would sacrifice. Thus, I believe it connects to purpose and meaning. And, I came to sense that a strongly expressed desire for improved work-life balance perhaps indicates that something, purpose-wise, appears to be *out-of-kilter* and/or of a diminishing work environment (Dodge, *et. al.*, 2012, p.230).

These discussions indicated to me that **my personal work-life preferences are an important pointer to my current developmental aspirations**, and that a personal sense of balance, choice or flexibility between different life-purposes is helpful. So, if you are questioning your work-life balance – I do now and again - it is perhaps an indicator of something amiss; that your work (volume or content) is not matching your current needs. It might be worth realising what that is. I certainly look to and, where I can, now more consciously organise my work to suit my wider needs.

A place to stand

Over the inquiry I became conscious of wanting a tangible **connection with where I work and who I work with**. I recall how I had once been viewed as “*synonymous*” with one organisation; perhaps an expression of my association with the organisation’s aims, work, civil society role, and from the agency the work gave me. Archimedes famously said he could move the Earth if he had a lever long enough *and a place to stand*; inquiring into what *Place* meant seemed relevant.

I’ve reflected back on some notes I’d made in my *musings*-notebook which, recalling a famous story from Bede¹¹⁴, indicated something of *Place* for me. Bede tells about the Christian conversion of King Edwin of Northumbria (586-630 CE) through the words of one of Edwin’s councillors and his interpretation of the Christian writ:

‘This present life on earth seems to me, king ... as though we were sitting at supper ... in the winter time, warmed by a bright fire burning in the middle of the hall, while the storms of wintry rain and snow rage without; when a single sparrow flies swiftly in through one entry and out by the other. In its little time indoors, the winter weather touches it not, yet its brief moment of security lasts but a second, as it passes from the winter to the winter, escaping our sight. So

¹¹⁴ Bede was an 8th Century monk who wrote the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

seems the life of man in its little season; what follows, and what went before we know not.'
(Morris, 1995, p.390)

Early Anglo-Saxon halls were open at the eaves to allow smoke to clear, what he refers to is how the sparrow enters and leaves the hall through these openings. Metaphorically this passage felt symbolic of my work and *Place*. Here I am the sparrow, the organisational consultant, who enters an organisational setting. What then does *Place* mean to me when I know, sooner or later, I will leave it? Can I flourish without strong connections to it? It inspired another painting (see *Figure 6.2.*), that interestingly, with the *PPP Möbius*, was the first I attempted and I was an early indication of the importance of place for my flourishing.

As I started roughing out the hall I was concerned that it was becoming a straight picture; not abstract enough to explore my impressions of *Place*. But that changed as I began to add colour; by accident the roof became golden, the walls on a whim became red. The passage of the sparrow now matched the picture I'd made of *PPP* (see *PPP Möbius spiral, Figure 1.2.*). Through it I saw myself bringing my purposes and practice, and bits of my former places, and bursting forth again, spilling much, but perhaps enriched through an *accelerator* of a journey.

Figure 6.2: Red-Gold Halls (Created May 2013):



I again made notes on the page, questioning the clear space over the roof: '*confined, interaction curtailed in the hall*'? Wondering what does it mean where there is no colour, am I constrained in this place, does it restrict my interactions with those outside the hall? I wrote: '*Red and golden halls*', a place to crave? And '*Red and golden cages*', a place to be trapped?

Intriguingly I noted how the gap under the eaves was black, yet the open doorway was white. I really couldn't find a colour to put here. It seemed to note uncertainty, even a void, and outstanding questions about my own work locus. Do I really value and need to be working in an organisation, or can I gain satisfaction working independently? I felt these questions were repeating in some of my reflections and across my client cases. Indeed, from various parts of my inquiry, I realised my feelings of **connections with people were strongly linked to my sense of flourishing**. Having authentic connections with people through work appears vital for me.

I came to note two main facets of *Place* that seemingly have implications into how I flourish at work. The first was that my **individual relationship to my workplace** - my positive identification with it - relates to me being able to act purposefully within society through it. Second was my evident hope for a **genuine connection to others within the context of a workplace community**. Combined they seemed to approximate to *relatedness* and the definitions of *social well-being* I'd seen in the literature (Section 3.1.).

My *Place*-sensations about working with URANUS, another of my NGO clients (Section 4.1.), seemingly resonated in the people and the organisation; coming from my respect for them. I think it also came from my feeling that they considered me as good for them – worthy enough. This self-employed consultant hoped for a feeling of engagement with this bigger community; the *sparrow in the hall* getting warmth from another's hearth.

In early-2016 in the midst of my inquiry, I visited some former colleagues in northern Italy with Vida; my youngest. We stayed with Francesca, my counterpart when our two organisations had worked together, and her young son Paulo. Francesca now lives in part of a beautiful old palazzo and each night, once the children were asleep, we would reminisce; sipping wine and smoking her roll-ups. This *vignette*, and the realisations from it, shows something of my increasing awareness of my need for engagement with others through my work.

Vignette 10 – Mentoring Myself (Reflection from early-2016)

Leaning on the window sill, looking across the terracotta-tiled roofs, I mentioned to Francesca that I had always felt that she didn't quite identify with the work we used to do. I sensed an uncertainty about where she fitted in. She conceded and began relating that she had recently – and secretly – completed a specialist course that marked a possible return to her former career. She then disclosed that her boss of thirteen years was retiring soon and this coming change in leadership presented her with a considerable sense of personal unease and professional drift. Untying her hair and then brushing a strand behind her ear, half-jokingly, she said:

“My life is a mess.”

She paused. I waited quietly, refilling our glasses. Suddenly serious, she said:

“I am not happy to work with this new manager, I don't trust him. I would want to move internally. This is a secret, don't tell the others, but I said as much to the Director.”

I recounted the story of my own career, of how, when I worked in conservation, I didn't feel that I knew enough, didn't belong, by not being a biologist or naturalist. Then I told her of how long it took me to realise what I really valued, and that my sense of meaning and purpose was revolving around helping others in the field of environment and democracy to work well.

As we talked I mentioned an article I'd read some years back called '*How to Stay Stuck in the Wrong Career*'.¹¹⁵ Francesca gave her characteristic inhaled laugh and some of the tension left her. I said I'd send it to her. Then she asked me, trying to be light:

“So, do you think I will still be in the organisation in one year or not? What's your bet?”

Stalling, I reminded her that she had lost a bet to me years ago; costing her a dinner. Conscious of my responsibility I suddenly felt uncomfortable answering, though not wanting to quash a call for my opinion:

¹¹⁵ Ibarra, 2002, p.40-47.

“Francesca, look whatever I say is sort of a decision, it comes across as a position of where you should go. But only you can decide, I would be uncomfortable to say anything now about which way you should head.

But, I think that you are starting, have started, to make a change already. That we are having this conversation is a part of this. I think this is your choice and it’s right that you start to think about it. I would say go back to what you really want to do. It seems clear that you have had doubts over your role, and maybe now you can think what you really want to do; where you feel good. Read the article it might help.”

We spoke further about her concerns and talked about how it was perhaps time to make that next shift for both the organisation and for herself. So much had happened to her in the last two-years, but it seemed there would be more and I worried that all I could do was to prompt her to take some control.

When I got home I dug the article out of my files and wrote Francesca a short note before posting it. Reflecting further, I had gained a feeling of Francesca as somehow wounded, so I sat down to paint my impressions from our conversation. Influenced by Venice’s lion of Saint Mark, that I had seen during my stay, I worked up an idea (*Figure 6.3.*).

The painting is fairly natural, at least the main colours. It also follows the classic pose of the winged lion with it holding a book. Initially I was going to omit it, but then I sensed that it was an important part. So, I showed it with an old page ripped out and a new page shown. A way of conveying her desire to start anew, not getting rid of the old book, but writing a new page in it? I considering showing the lion blindfolded over one eye, but I felt that Francesca was actually very aware of her situation; this wasn’t like JUPITER (Section 3.2.).

Still I had a sense that there were constraints on her and that she was striving to break-free, so I drew a broken chain on the leg of the lion. Noting perhaps a struggle to realise her desired change and growth. It felt good and strong - autonomous – and, despite the wound I added, denoting a little fragility, there was a feeling of resolution and courage that I gained. I felt it linked with her story.

Figure 6.3: Wounded Lion (Created March 2016):



When I sat back to look at it I was thinking that, as Francesca is female, perhaps I should have painted a lioness. It was then that the penny dropped. Actually, this image was really about me and my own search for flourishing. I had rather been considering myself all along, conflating my story with hers. I now understood my own feelings of being chained and wounded by some previous work experiences and how breaking free of them was wrapped into this image.

From this conversation with Francesca, I further **realised that I've felt an imbalance in what my current work provides**. Those *Place* aspects from my *notion of workplace flourishing* were made very clear to me, especially where *Place* feeds into my sense of *Purpose*, and without them I feel somewhat incomplete. I wrote:

'I now understand that this speaks to my purpose, of needing to be a more active, and, importantly, involved agent for change. I see that I have a limit to the vicarious nature of much of my work; I also need to be doing and feeling the action.' (R. Atkinson, musings, April 2016)

It reinforced my understanding that, despite positive feelings from my consulting work, my sense of *Place* was absent from my own *flourishing equation*. I saw **I want an active connection to my**

workplaces, where, by being more of a player, I could better realise tangible work with others.¹¹⁶

Indeed, much of the happiness and well-being literature I've covered notes how people flourish more when what they do is done with the *right* people (Dolan, 2014, p.29). Yet, I've found it difficult to develop the connections and trust for the sort of involved relatedness I would wish for. It takes me time and the right constellation of people and activities.

I noted with JUPITER, how I became worried that my work could potentially be damaging to the people involved. Surely it would be inconsistent with my values to cause harm to people? This reflection led to my shift from focussing solely on organisational needs (an abstract thing anyway) to that of the people in it. And it brought forward questions about my flourishing and those of others in difficult non-flourishing situations. What could I do differently? When should I withdraw? How far can I go when contracted to a particular type of organisation? This, and my other experiences, altered my understanding of *Place*. **Extending it from the organisational/institutional concept I started with, to an idea of place relating to people and society.**

The three work-related **Place-needs** developed from my inquiries are: *Relatedness, Supervisor behaviour and Solidarity*:

Relatedness: This is one element of the psychologists Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory. Indeed, much of the discussion between my *Peer* Laura and myself revolved around our need for **positive connections with people** in our work environment: '*...there are ways of people being with one another that are incredibly generative and help flourishing. ... [There is] a sense of well-being when I am in that group and acknowledge that I belong there*' (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014). And, when we couldn't find meaningful relations with others, where authentic connections are stifled, it was truly disheartening and would seem to reveal a *diminishing workplace*.

Liz, also a free-lancer, noted how her lack of regular connection to others was limiting her work practise. She talked about the relief from not having to deal with office politics and that there might be different requirements for relatedness between introverts and extroverts, but she spoke in detail about one of her best work periods and the importance of her relations with others for validating work. Other *Peers* spoke of their need for connection with people and particularly the satisfaction of teamwork.

¹¹⁶ Francesca and I are working together again, when I received my e-mail account from her workplace I had an overwhelming feeling of being home.

My lesson was that working with others is a side I enjoy and realise I miss. I find that vibrant experience of working together within a focussed group and its associated social aspects overwhelmingly positive. It is something I now actively look to develop (and recommend to others) as I think it a fundamental part of my being able to flourish through work.

Supervisor behaviour: If work relationships are important then one of the most important relationships must be with leaders. It was no surprise then that their experiences of supervisors were those that the *Peers* spoke about with the most passion. How **manager behaviour was a clear factor in their feeling of flourishing or languishing.**

In fact, almost all of the conversations I had with the *Peers* revolved at some point around performance management, appraisals or mentoring. Especially expressing the important feedback function of leaders and people's aspirations for a developmental approach from management. In their book Goffee and Jones write: *'Modern leadership may be as much about an authenticity of task or place as it is about the person leading and what that individual person thinks or does.'* (2015, p 160). There is certainly a critical role for leaders and managers in setting the tone for workplace flourishing; with strong reverberations towards Douglas McGregor's (2006) *Theory-Y* type of manager.

From my own experiences, I came to believe that the *unhealthiest* managers I have experienced were somehow fearful of allowing their staff to organise or develop themselves. Seemingly wanting to retain control, even if they couldn't effectively wield the power they'd garnered. To me there is a nexus of issues here related to flourishing, where both staff development and autonomy (in terms of decision-making choices) can become undermined and relatedness may suffer when staff become set against one another by divisive leadership practices.

Perhaps I am now over-sensitive to this issue, with an aversion to power abuses, but to me a **progressive developmental leadership approach seems fundamental to workplace flourishing.** Owing to this I look to ascertain the attitudes and assumptions of the leaders I work with (asking questions against some tests I've developed). I'll try to work with anyone, to understand them, but sometimes I find myself compelled to step away; it's good for us all to know when to do so.

Solidarity: Fairness generally and the ability to **accept the needs of others** were highlighted in my talks with the *Peers*. Indeed, for us, where an organisation was perceived to be unfair (circling-back to values above) it naturally undermined our connection to it. Simona, an OD specialist, made the tough

observation: “...some companies do all the well-being initiatives and then treat people like shit, [it’s a complete] *waste of investment*” (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015).

The *Peers* cited poor work conditions, unclear pay and compensation, or inequitable practices as *diminishing* of the work experience. Nicholas’s situation underlined some of the potentially diminishing aspects, including: short-termism, lack of stability in positions, and threats of job losses. Contemporary discussions on zero-hour contracts seems to fall here (see University College London, 2017a).

Organisational fairness is clearly an important factor, which I’ve framed as inclusiveness and *Place-building through workplace solidarity*.

With Laura my conversation moved differently, as she gave perhaps a *broader* interpretation of this fairness angle, turning to a need for fairness for all - a **wider solidarity**. So that when people do not fit or weaken an organisation we need to make hard choices by letting them go. It is an interesting position, taking-off from where an organisation that hopes to help its employees to flourish could begin to look like some sort of *nanny*. And leading to one where the role of management - by **offering a supportive framework**, but not guarantees – is to **create an organisational culture that helps people to authentically flourish**.

This perspective takes aspects of solidarity beyond the issue of work conditions to an *enriching* culture, and the values, processes and structures that sustain them. It denotes a difficult balancing act and I’ve tended to think that any organisation should first work towards getting rid of the obvious diminishing conditions or at least ameliorating them where they can’t (e.g. job security is a big problem for NGOs). Indeed, how my clients communicate their HR approaches is often a big sign to me of general management attitudes and their willingness to consider more enriching approaches.

Changing practice

The last of my three facets is that of *Practice*. Early on in my inquiry I’d noted that ‘*the type of work I do, the way I work, and my technical proficiency*’ seemed to frame what was important to me in my professional practice. Raising connections to how I show up and how effective I am. Yet curiously, considering that my thesis originated from and is based on my work practice, I struggled somewhat to relate the nature of my practice’s contribution to my flourishing. Owing to the theoretical connections of the practical (through work) with flourishing (‘*It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action*’ (Heron, 1996, p.34)) this presented a challenge to my thesis. Let me expand on this conundrum.

I recognised from my various client cases that I sometimes had this *sinking* feeling, of not knowing enough (my work with JUPITER and URANUS are good examples). It meant, in terms of my flourishing, I didn't feel competent enough either in the moment and/or on reflection. I felt that either I didn't have the required abilities or I needed to learn more. Perhaps it is because I have worked around *experts* all my career, so I never feel quite good enough. Even though I see how those experts have often relied on me.

And even though I've slowly accepted how **my Practice-facet is connected to my learning and development (change)**, I seemingly still want to be just a little bit *more-sure*, have a little bit more knowledge. In other words, I suffer this idea of wanting to be the expert, while realising that one can never know enough, never be expert enough in finite terms. So why this attitude? Why do I sometimes dismiss what I do and retreat into looking for more certainty? It had meant engaging with my *Practice-quandary*, to understand myself in my practice. But, finding an inquiring-image to represent and reveal the essence of my professional practice was rather circuitous.

Eventually, the insight I gained of my work practice came from when I tried to understand the underlying qualities of my approach to organisational change. In particular, I had begun to consider how **organisational change was occurring both organically (naturally/spontaneously) and through intentional cultivation of it (conscious/periodic efforts)**. My developing interpretation seemingly resonates with several authors I've covered. Notably, Peter Senge's natural growth metaphor, expressed in the *Dance of Change* (Senge, *et. al.*, 1999, p.10), and that of Bob Garratt in *Creating a Learning Organisation* (1990), whereby '*...organisational change ...is both an evolutionary and truly revolutionary process...*' (p.65). Weick and Quinn's work on episodic (1999, p.365) and continuous (1999, p.372) change models further clarified my view.

Ultimately, I came to believe that both forms of change are usually present and are effectively working together. In effect, I consider that there is a sort of *background-level* of continuous change present in all organisations, with its intensity impacted upon by internal conditions and external circumstance. This background-level may then periodically be amplified by a more conscious or intentional change intervention.

To try to engage with these ideas, through mid-2014, I developed a series of pictures to expand on my notion of this coupling of spontaneous and planned change (see *Figure 6.4.*). Here organisational change is symbolised by this green 'plant-like' growth, it may develop in different directions, but it can also stop

or wither. Still, like those change interventions I am involved in, there are planned efforts *grafted* onto an existing growth. These can be helpful, can fail, or result in unexpected outcomes.

Figure 6.4: Natural & Cultivated Change I & II (Created April & June 2014):



As a metaphor for change this highlighted for me the natural limits to the effect of my work practice. In addition, these images indicated how vital the background-level of the organisation is in-terms of change and growth, too stilted and little would happen, too vibrant and it might become chaotic. It indicated that my change interventions, indeed my work in general, work both within and on this background-level. This led me to consider further how and where I see organisational change is taking place. It was from this that I further defined my constructivist-change position.¹¹⁷

As any organisation is made up of people, I feel that it must be in the individual(s) involved where change *occurs*. **It is the people that change, develop, and adapt their culture and working practices, thus organisational change connects with personal change, learning and development.** As Senge says: *‘Organisations work the way they do because of how we work, how we think and interact; the changes required ahead are not only in our organisations but in ourselves as well’* (1990, p.xvi).

¹¹⁷ You may recall that this features in Sub-section 1.3.2., and I explain how some of my positions developed or deepened within the inquiry, but that I had to decide if they were best shown as context or findings.

I also connected with Richard Boyatzis's (2006) engaging view of how individual change happens¹¹⁸ (linked to stages of pre-contemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance proposed by Weick and Quinn (1999, p.373)). I related to his description of the sensation of how we experience personal change: *'The change process is often non-linear and discontinuous, appearing or being experienced as a set of discoveries or epiphanies'* (p.609). Indeed, I've already referred to where the *Peers* spoke of such moments in their working lives and that inform their working practice.¹¹⁹ I have called them *realisation points*; what Boyatzis calls *tipping- or trigger-points* (2006, p.609; also, Stanley, 2009, p.32).

In closing these ruminations about organisational and personal change processes I could eventually come to a picture (*Figure 6.5.*) that connected my practice, which is about change and learning, to my workplace flourishing.

Figure 6.5: Practice Image (Created June 2014):



There is the same organic growth, but the blocks, which I had signified as intent, had changed into thicker sections with more colour (and changing to green-blue, with purple and red, from the cooler

¹¹⁸ Intentional Change Theory. He also extends it beyond the individual to teams, organisations, communities, and countries, and which links into the unifying arguments found in CRP.

¹¹⁹ *'The most recent research shows that successful change requires a substantial dose of experiential learning'* (Krzmaric, 2012, p.77).

blue before), plus the stem ends were not dead ends, but bud or flower-like (I wrote on it '*seeds not ends*'). It reinforced my realisation that the plant – now representing my practice - was a whole, with a blurring of the separation between spontaneity and intent found in the previous images. I saw how the image denoted those aspirations I had for my work and how bringing this to fruition is connected to my flourishing. Thereby signifying how my **work practice contributes to and is being informed by my change and development**. Thus, even from those past or perhaps less successful events, my sense of flourishing within the process of work is being supported and constructed.

It feels hopeful to me and, I think, aesthetically pleasing, which connotes with the evolving ideal of my work practice. **It says something towards artfulness and mastery, and being a catalyst**. It took my realisation of the worth of my practice beyond my sometimes-paralysing expert focus. Sure, a **conventional-expert/post-conventional-facilitator dichotomy** still exists in me, but the weighting between them feels more equal. I better comprehend the boundaries and thus the expectation of what I can effect.

For me *realising* this generative change (for myself and for my clients) is necessary for my flourishing; while, negative change situations or stagnation are damaging (others have made this connection: Morrison, Therrien, & Alies, 2016; Handy, 1999, p.275-277). Indeed, in the *Peer Inquiry Group* we all noted how **our sense of achievement and personal change was an element in our experience of flourishing**. It connects with my *notion of workplace flourishing* and the *Practice* aspects of that. The sense of learning, development or progression, by being dynamically engaged with our activity, and a sense of doing it well. It underpins my belief in the centrality of work too (Sub-section 1.3.1.), and it indicates something about **requiring the sense of that growth as much as what that growth is**.

Those work-related **Practice-needs** seemingly supporting this facet are: *Self-direction, Growth and development, and Subsidiarity*:

Self-direction: To **make choices and to organise oneself**, to some degree, appeared to be an important element in the *Peers* work practice. Mark said "*my job gives me a platform to do what I want to do*" (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015), and a big part of that was his being able to self-direct. Certainly, the idea of self-direction has a strong lean towards the ideas of autonomy and *flow*, and other well-being theories that emphasise environmental mastery or competence.

Furthermore, Laura noted, when we discussed her need for autonomy, how important it was for her to organise her work to do those things she loves to do. In that sense, she is self-directed to a high degree,

for her: “*The word is choice, choice is important at the boundary of what you accept*” (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014). And she expanded further on this, to where the structure of her work-life and its variety is important. She spoke of requiring a certain amount of stretch (others mention this), but that she “*can only do certain periods where I can do overwhelm*”. Which I took as, if she were in a situation of near constant overwhelm, this would be undermining her work and the ability to flourish through it. She also said that the opposite, of being underutilised, is as bad.

For me this suggests that perhaps there is an optimum position for everyone when it comes to self-direction, some need more and some less, or in different ways. I feel I do need the opportunity to make choices, but within the frame or context of my work. Perhaps evaluating whether our need for autonomy is served at work might reveal an interesting edge about our own development.

Growth and development: Most of my *Peers’* accounts of their work said a lot about this second element. They spoke, in detail, about **learning and growth and development**. Plus, the **need to develop and be creative**, to master something, appeared a fundamental factor in our sense of workplace flourishing.

Personally, to feel that I am learning and developing is an essential part of who I am. Certainly my doctoral inquiry has contributed enormously to my sense of growth; most of the time.... Conversely, I know from some of my work experiences where I have felt constrained or had to do work that was uninteresting I have become bored and disengaged (my work with my client SATURN underlined this (*Vignette 6*, Section 4.1.)).

Nowadays I always look to see how I will support growth and development for my clients. Practical organisational aspects like job design, team work, performance management and appraisal practices come to mind, but on a personal level for each task or long-term project I do, I always ask myself where the learning is?

Subsidiarity: Liz related how her coaching work helped to support her clients to gain more control over their jobs. And, while our discussions about self-direction also orientated around the role of leaders, for some *Peers* there was a realisation that external issues and their job structure meant that they cannot control enough of the factors impacting on them. Admittedly this area was less well discussed than others, which perhaps denotes it is either less important as a *Practice-need* or it is not readily identified. As its effects are *attributed* to the pervading leadership/governance culture.

As such, while related to the previous ones, this need for me had a different source. So, I called it organisational subsidiarity to indicate how **decision-making needs to be at the appropriate level**. Subsidiarity is perhaps an unusual term (see glossary), but it indicates my belief that structural and/or cultural positions impact on self-direction (autonomy) and determine the opportunities for growth and development (competence). I see this need as my challenge to those leaders that espouse broader decision-making, but don't adhere to it.

I really watch this in my work, as I am convinced that an organisation's process/structure and culture/values are revealed by their decision-making approaches. Gauging how and where decisions are made, and by whom, is a big indicator for me and ultimately, as an organisational interface, it determines much of how I can work with my colleagues and clients. Can I be involved in the decisions about my work as I should be?

6.1.2. – PPP as a flourishing compass

Let me introduce another case here, that of PLUTO, to illustrate my further reflection and how I began to appreciate where my *PPP Motif* provided me with a way to *appraise my work-situation*.

Since 2012 I had essentially worked alone, but in late-2015 I started to develop some work with a new colleague, Christiane. Like me she worked as a free-lancer and we felt our different backgrounds might lead to some useful exchange of ideas and allow us to support one another. At the beginning, we worked to develop a proposal for a child protection NGO. It was unsuccessful, but what was telling was how easily we worked together and how we seemed to feed off this collaboration. Each bringing new ideas and perspectives, learning from and leaning on the other.

In summer 2016, after another attempt to secure work, we connected with PLUTO a human rights organisation that uses the arts and media to deliver its message. PLUTO had recently expanded their work programme substantially, but hadn't addressed what this meant for them organisationally. As a result, their recent core event had become virtually unmanageable, the staff exhausted by it, and they wanted to find a way to organise better.

Again, Christiane and I worked up a proposal, but this time after together we met face-to-face with PLUTO's leadership. This was something we'd not done before and it presented an interesting situation for me. Bringing someone into a negotiation that I had never worked with previously. Initially I felt unsure of how we would interact in the meeting and how she would relate to the client (who I had met with already). I was in part uncomfortable, but I decided to sit back and let her lead.

Vignette 11: Working together (PLUTO case, written mid-2016)

With our open conversational style, and feeding off one another's words, we worked well through the meeting. I began to realise that, though similar in many ways, we had very subtle differences in our approaches and experiences; and which meant that we saw things in different ways. It was refreshing. Christiane could read people in a way I would not have, bringing that knowledge into our approach and allowing for emergence of new ideas. While I tended to try to keep us onto to the overall outcome of the work, which could have become restrictive.

As we worked with PLUTO there were many instances where we gelled excitingly and others where we stuck, but we kept talking through these moments. There was an unspoken personal investment between us to make this work for us and the client. I recall one particular passage of work that showed to me how working with a trusted colleague brought out the best in both of us. It was for the second workshop session with PLUTO. We had planned to move into a discussion on their organisational structure and communication processes, but, prior to the session, as we talked over lunch, we realised that the preparation work they had agreed to do in the intervening time wasn't really there. So, we decided to do an extended check-in with them by revisiting and clarifying the earlier activities. We adapted the work we had planned to do, and eventually brought it somewhere that was more relevant and useful; developing it as we went.

The session was exhausting work, the complexity of their planning process meant we had to keep our attention up at all times. But, like *tag wrestlers*, we seemed to naturally sense when one of us was

struggling and then the other stepped in. In-the-end, I felt convinced that we had been able to support the organisation and its people to the limits of our intervention.¹²⁰

The experience of working closely with a co-worker was a delight. I felt it brought out better work in me. I was less doubting of myself too, as I had someone to discuss the change process with and also to rely on when things became static. I was particularly helped by Christiane's pragmatic attitude to what could be achieved. My notes captured for me the essence of this co-worker relationship:

'Feeling an excitement and urgency, added responsibility of joint work - not letting the other down, helping me through the down parts, when with lower enthusiasm, building-up of one another's ideas, helping to sustain confidence in myself.' (R. Atkinson, musing diary, July 2, 2016)

As I worked with Christiane and PLUTO, it confirmed how **working with others, that relatedness part of place, when it works well, is a strong support and element to my flourishing at work**. I had a feeling of coming out of isolation and into community with others. Solidarity and relatedness, I realised is a big part of who I am and how I practice, but I could also sense that this was connected to my self-belief and an ability to grow. It spoke to my practice needing this reference of another, beyond the client, to build from. Gaining the support from another as I worked allowed me to better be myself. In addition, the success of the work was seemingly reinforcing my civil society purposes.

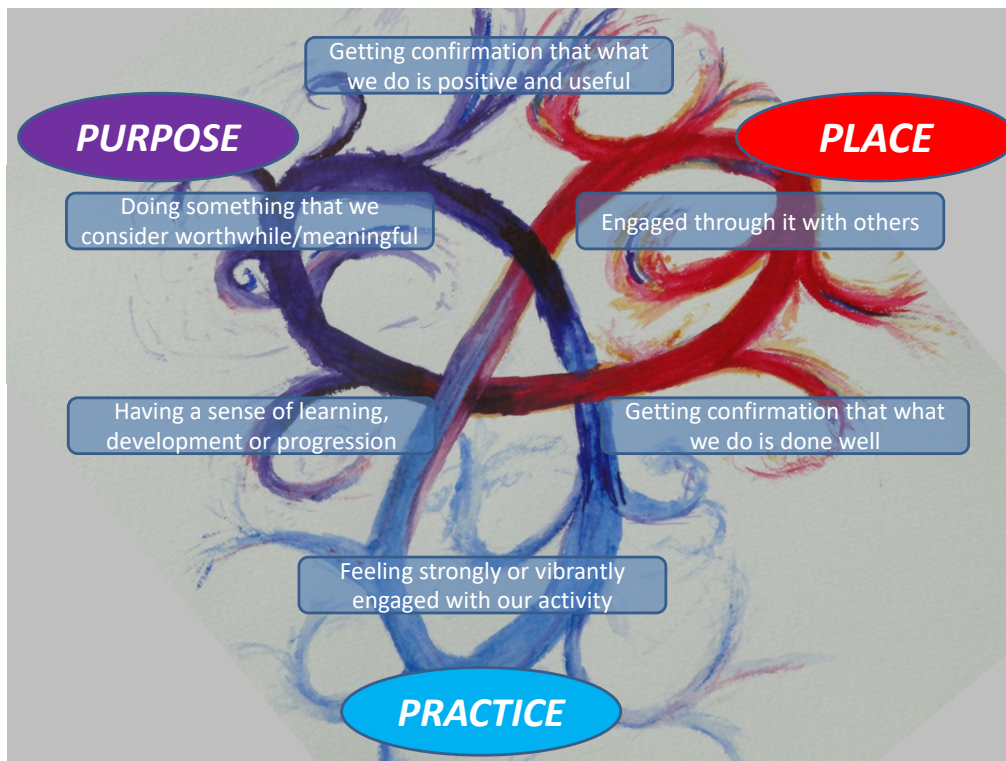
From this case-*vignette* **the interconnections between Place - or here people – to the other aspects of Practice and Purpose became more evident to me** (returning to my intertwined image of them in *Figure 1.2.*). There are echoes of such *PPP-like* combinations evident in others' theories too (like the Riff & Keyes quote that heads this section). So, it struck me that by looking to expand on where the *PPP* elements interacted I might further understand my own *work-needs*.

To investigate and express this in mid-2017, I seized upon the idea of using my *PPP* Motif not only as an inquiry lens, but as a way to organise the different outcomes in my thesis (clarifying again). So, I split the

¹²⁰ I have since heard that they have made enormous strides in their organisational restructuring. The staff have worked together to develop their positions and internal-communication, and the organisation changed from their limiting association format to a foundation. The director of PLUTO reported to their funder that our sessions had been a *"life-changing experience."*

four main conditions of my *notion of workplace flourishing* (Section 3.3) into parts and tried to locate them on the image of the *PPP Motif* (see Figure 6.6.). Combining words and images from my inquiry, using their different qualities to see something else.

Figure 6.6: Connected Features of my Workplace Flourishing Experience (Created mid-2017)

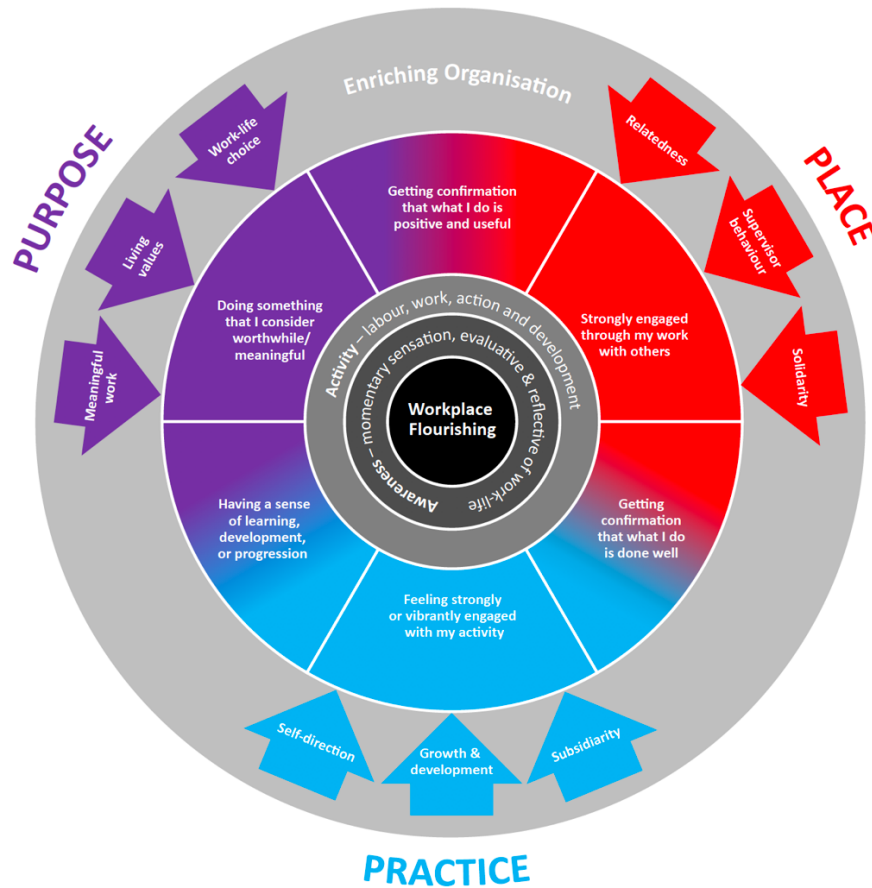


Overlaying these features illustrated how I feel they correlate. Plus, by matching the system-like circularity of *PPP* to the *notion*, it reinforced my view that **for my workplace flourishing to become apparent they are all required to be present in the *right formula***. Furthermore, it revealed to me where I believed that some conditions from my *notion* lie closer to one or other of the three *PPP* facets and/or where they interrelate:

- **Purpose** – Doing something that I/we consider worthwhile/meaningful.
- **Purpose/Place** – Getting confirmation that what I/we do is positive and useful.
- **Place** – Strongly engaged through my/our work with others.
- **Place/Practice** – Getting confirmation that what I/we do is done well.
- **Practice** – Feeling strongly or vibrantly engaged with my/our activity.
- **Practice/Purpose** – Having a sense of learning, development, or progression.

I give further implications of each of these connections for workplaces in Annex 6.1., but below in *Figure 6.7.*, they are shown combined together with the main outputs of my inquiry explorations. Furthermore, by doing this I could better appreciate the evolution of my ideas around *Purpose, Place and Practice* and how they represent overall *drivers* for my workplace flourishing.

Figure 6.7. – Combined schema of Workplace Flourishing (Late-2018)



This schema, while less fluid than the previous one, helps provide intelligibility, connections, and placement to the different aspects of my inquiry. First, the outer part illustrates the *PPP*-facets as the three overall *drivers*. With their associated nine organisational supports or needs (Meaningful work, Living values, Work-life choice, Relatedness, Supervisor behaviour, Solidarity, Self-direction, Growth and development, and Subsidiarity) that originated from the *Peer* discussions/diaries and URANUS case (Sections: 3.3., 4.1., 4.2., & 5.1.). These nine supports are utilised in both the *Work Enriching Areas* of my OSA and the organising principles of an enriching organisation (Sections 5.1., & 5.4.); they provide the frame for my enriching organisation.

Second, the coloured ring shows the, now, six conditions to my *notion of workplace flourishing* (Section 3.3.) as unified and aligned with their corresponding *PPP*-facets. I feel that the six key conditions within *my notion of workplace flourishing* - when present, when they sort of line-up - appear to denote when I get the most out of my work, when I feel satisfaction, growth, connections, and development.

Thirdly, with my workplace flourishing at the centre, its formation (the *how*) through my work experiences is shown by the inner-rings of Activity and Awareness (discussed in Section 4.3.). I've realised that there is a sense-making as I work and when I consider my work-life that, expressed through this and described by the flourishing conditions, provides a feeling of coherence or order to what I do. It's really when I flourish through my work; one might call it *sense-making*.

I hold this combined view in my mind now, it stays with me. As I consider my work, day-to-day and over time, I realise that I ask myself where I am against them. Both for my own personal questions about my work-flourishing and, as I ponder the organisations I work with, what might be promoting or limiting workplace flourishing. Furthermore, this view may conceivably be useful for others; it is an avenue for future exploration.

In many ways I see the **six conditions to my notion of workplace flourishing as a sort of compass for me** (in the final chapter I show where I orientate now). Indeed, I now appreciate how this combined-model underpins my work practices explored in Chapter 5. And, I believe that through their orientation to the *PPP-drivers* and nine associated *needs*, that they are potentially more closely connected to the *how* of flourishing than other models. Remembering my observations in Sub-section 5.2., I believe that my *PPP Motif* **bridges successfully between work flourishing and potential supporting practices**. In particular, this combined version indicates the importance of attending to all aspects and avoiding *cherry-picking*.

Crucially though, combining them has helped me to **find a way to communicate my ideas about workplace flourishing to others**. I have presented them to various colleagues now and to the *Peers*. They have genuinely engaged with it; providing positive or supportive responses. More of their feedback is covered in Chapter 7., but my confidant Lucie's reaction, after going through the points, is illustrative: "*Yes, yes, I see that I miss these things! A connection with others and being engaged with it. They're where I need to act.*" And, in part, it has prompted her to take another job.

This model is a personal *suggestion* that relates my own sense of how I flourish through work, located in my context and character. Certainly, it needs further exploration, but for me the fusing of these main

outcomes from my thesis presents a useful culmination to my lengthy, and non-linear, process of sensing, reflection, and condensing.

6.2. – Workplace flourishing: Implications...

‘Design and development of organizations will have a fundamental impact on the wellbeing of millions of people in the future. It will influence the distribution of opportunity and wealth in a capitalist economy as well as influence whether the combination of work, family, and personal lives can be combined in a sustainable way.’ (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011, p.6)

A pervading insight I gained from my inquiry is that **work and the workplace in contemporary society provide an *essential arena* where we as individuals act and can flourish**. I saw how work, by providing a forum for action and achievement, contributed to building meaning, fostering connections, and enabling development for me, the *Peers*, and some case organisations. Indeed, reaching back to the *centrality of work* expressed by Dejours and Deranty (2010) and confirmed by Arendt (2000, p.179), the majority of the literature I considered make this positive connection between action in the public sphere and the relationships garnered. As Herzberg *et. al.*, propose: *‘We cannot help but feel that the greatest fulfillment of man is to be found in activities that are meaningfully related to his own needs as well as those of society’* (1993, p.139).

I believe the implication of this perspective, actually beyond the organisational benefits of promoting workers’ flourishing, is that there is both **a moral/rights angle and a societal argument for supporting workplace flourishing**. Indeed, for me, by looking at work purposes differently, from a flourishing position and not only through efficiency, effectiveness, or financial filters, the conception of what’s really important shifts. It strengthens my conviction that **all organisations, and not just civil society ones, should find ways to help their workers and stakeholders to flourish**. This section highlights my reasons for this and several implications I believe there are for organisations and society.

6.2.1. – ...for enriching organisations

I have a small pile of papers and books on my desk that, under a variety of superlatives, talk about building *human-centric* workplaces. They are honest and involved works, full of ideas synonymous with those found in this thesis, and with excellent practices that I'd endorse. Yet few of them convincingly say why one should do this. I don't mean why as in being more effective or profitable or getting the best talent, or whatever, but really *deeply* why? In fact, the bigger narrative for me now, coming from my inquiries, is that I consider **human flourishing through work as the *meta-purpose* of organisations**. Agreeing with James O'Toole when he opines:

If Aristotle is right that the good life entails developing one's human potential, then providing conditions in which employees can do so is a clear moral responsibility of leaders of work organizations. The logic is inescapable: Organizations that deny employees the chance to develop their potential deny them the opportunity to realize their humanity. And that is unjust. (O'Toole, 2005, p.228, my emphasis)

I realise that this is seemingly a big leap for many in organisations to even conceive of, never mind to sustain:

'...it is recognised (and all organisational best practice and theory agrees), ... that it is important to tap into what intrinsically motivates a human being to flourish and that such human flourishing plays a large part in the success of organisations. However, it seems that this awareness often operates separately from the 'hard' discourse of organisational survival.' (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011, p.181)

Indeed, as I have written above (Section 5.3.), I believe the main component to *how* can organisations foster human flourishing is that **they have to want to**. However, the key place of *wanting to* - also for civil society groups - is at the level of leaders and governance. Leaderships' influence, as it evinces organisational values and approaches, peppers my and the *Peers* work experiences:

'What determines which stage an organization operates from? It is the stage through which its leadership tends to look at the world. Consciously or unconsciously, leaders put in place organizational structures, practices, and cultures that make sense to them, that correspond to their way of dealing with the world.' (Laloux, 2014, p.41)

Certainly, the differing approaches of the leaders in my various cases, and their values, strongly determined the working style of their organisations and what was eventually acceptable in the development work I was doing with them. Consequently, **having the willingness of leadership to entertain such a flourishing purpose - its virtues and values - is a fundamental requirement**. But

transformational, and transforming, leaders appear to be a rather rare thing (noted by Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2003, p.67), and, although it is beyond this work to cover approaches required for developing common values and leadership transformations (there is a whole *industry* of approaches towards transformational change), this realisation has marked some limits to what I might achieve in my, usually short-term, OD interventions.

Let me illustrate this conundrum with a conversation I had with another OD consultant. This consultant, let's call him Geoff, had been working with a large American association to coach some of their programme staff. The association works to help its clients, long-term unemployed, to start businesses. As such it has a list of work ethics and values that the organisation asks its programme officers to uphold. Geoff explained the situation of Gayle, one of their staff he had been coaching:

"She's a great kid, enthusiastic, lights up a room when she enters, but her work hasn't always been the best. She has a problem with focussing on tasks and, as she scraped through high-school, her formal writing is a bit off. It's why I've been helping her."

"But she's gotten into a fix now. She got sick and had to take time off. Now she's come back, but she's still recovering and is often tired. Legally the organisation has to help with this, but she feels let down and unsupported. Things came to a head when the payroll had to recalculate her worktime and it meant that she ended up losing almost a month's salary. She wasn't told by HR and their reaction was less than sympathetic. She made a big complaint, all the way to the president of the organisation, which has really rankled her managers."

Geoff went on to explain:

"What bothers me now is that some of them are, unfairly, starting to press her further on her work mistakes. It's beginning to look like mobbing, without any understanding of her situation or of the efforts we have in hand. Furthermore, her complaint was deflected by her VP telling her that HR is there to support the board and not the staff! I mean duh! It totally sucks, I can't get how they don't see that how they are acting is completely against the grain of their own values."

This has all been anonymised and the details changed, but it represents a sadly common situation in my field (recall Daniel's approach at JUPITER). Here a well-meaning civil society organisation presents an ethical face externally, but things start to regress when it comes to how they treat their employees.¹²¹ They invest in staff development with one hand, and then *pull-the-rug-out* from under them with the other. Indeed, this case shows the often-contradictory messages coming from some organisations I work

¹²¹ In this case after Geoff and I spoke he proposed a review of their conditions and service culture, looking to amend, what Herzberg would call, the *hygiene* factors.

with. It's the CSOs *elephant-in-the-room*, how their staff are expected to act ethically while being treated unethically is beyond me.¹²² It presents a sort of organisationally-sourced cognitive dissonance.

The implication for me, and for many of the groups I work with (and much of the movement), is that there needs to be **a move from the lip-service that is often associated with organisational values to something that is living and actionable:**

'...we need to become much clearer on our core values. We need to be able to share that throughout the entire organization in such a way that everyone is aware of why this particular organization or business exists. How do we do that? We need to learn how to share control among the many, not the few.' (Notter & Grant, 2012, p.107-108, my emphasis)

While writers like Cook (2004, p.59-69) note useful and challenging questions for decision-makers¹²³, I would suggest that **the paradigmatically different purpose of an enriching organisation requires values and behaviours of decision-making that are systemically different from most contemporary organisations.** Perhaps the main re-orientation here, to *hardwire* into an organisation the values associated with a flourishing purpose, might come about by thinking of organisations more in terms of communities and of employees as its citizens, with the checks and balances that that implies. Charles Handy has written engagingly of this:

'It is interesting to consider the implications that would follow if we thought of a business as a community rather than a property. No one can own a community, although they can help to finance it and can have a stake in it. Its members, in turn, belong to it but are not owned by it. As the word 'company' suggests, they are companions and are more properly regarded as citizens with responsibilities as well as rights, someone whose interests are intimately tied up with those of the corporation as a whole, or at least of their particular operating unit.' (2015, p.107)

As responsible citizens, it is up to us, within the institutions and structures of society, to actively take part in political decision-making. To me organisational citizenship would thus denote a more mature set of relationships and behaviours (supporting the *Activity* in Arendt's *vita activa*, see Annex 4.3.). In fact, there are a variety of initiatives suggesting how more inclusive decision-making might be created in organisations (e.g., self-management (Laloux, 2014, p.61-137); citizen organisations (Handy, 2015, p.110-119); employee owned businesses (Co-ownership Solutions LLP, 2013, Lawrence, Pendleton, & Mahmoud, 2018)). However, this further implies that to make it work, **it is not only the structures and processes of organisations that have to differ, but the attitudes and engagement of the individuals**

¹²² Cable covers some of the impacts of this, notably the chillingly termed '*learned helplessness*' (2018, p.30).

¹²³ He presents a wonderful checklist that covers: **participation, transparency, responsibility and accountability, and honesty.** I'd challenge any manager or leader interrogate their actions against it.

within them. This curves back to my questions about how change comes about and the limits of my practice.

It has been possible for me to develop some organisational enriching questions within my OSA tool (Section 5.1.) and I've proposed a set of organising principles for an *enriching organisation* (Section 5.4.) that I now use as questions when I start to engage with a client. I see them as denoting much of what would need to be considered as organisational practices - the **organisational hardware**. However, as most clients come to me for effectiveness and efficiency fixes, these are still only a prompt and a point of departure in my work (fully realising they are necessarily at a very high-level, and in rather *wodgy* language).

Hence, while I believe they provide a possible design doctrine for an organisation that would situate *workplace flourishing* at the core of its purposes, where **the real challenges lie is in the process of getting people – especially the leadership - in organisations to go there** and accept such ideas. Maybe these are the **software issues**? Still, I am resolved to pursue these ideas alongside my regular approaches and, to take them forward. Indeed, I am engaged with a couple of civil society OD providers to further explore what we might do together.

Helpfully, there is seemingly a developing recognition in the CSO community that there is a challenge to do things differently. In my work with my clients during the inquiry I've noticed an evolving outlook towards organisational development and well-being issues, from either no focus on them or the odd staff training, to some more involved well-being initiatives, that lead on to initiatives that address the whole organisational system (e.g., Holocracy, Integral/Teal). For example, the work around *The Great Transition*, being proposed by the Smart CSOs Lab, puts well-being as the ultimate goal for positive social and environmental change (Narberhaus & Sheppard, 2015, p.30). And, where much of the organisational effort to do so includes: decentralising decision-making (p.68), caring for people in the organisation (p.70), promoting work-life balance, and practicing sustainability (p.71).

On a field-wide scale I see **there is a need for an approach that is more political, even evangelising, around flourishing as a rights issue** (see the next Sub-section). Indeed, I do believe that in these febrile times there might be fertile ground for enriching approaches in CSOs. Perhaps you'll recall several recent scandals in the CSO movement, such as the tarnishing of Oxfam (BBC News, 2018), which has led to organisations and their donors scrambling to implement safeguarding and other ethical policies.

Implementing such policies at the cultural level will take more than a set of procedures. Certainly, for me, they would require an extension of their intent to involve the embedding in an organisation of the values and behaviours required for a flourishing environment (see Sachs, 2013). Furthermore, there is a need for the donor community to recognise and support such OD/CB measures and to address the resource and skill constraints on them (James & Hailey, 2007, p.3). Indeed, finding skilled OD providers to support this will be a challenge.

There is more here for me to determine, but I believe CSOs/NGOs could conceivably show the way. Many of their campaign positions have become mainstream, so perhaps they can also lead on how we work too. As Narberhaus & Sheppard propose:

'The Great Transition demands a shift towards sufficiency, well-being and solidarity. Activists, organisations and campaigns can play a much more positive role in cultural change if they embody and communicate the values of the new system.' (2015, p.36, my emphasis)

Indeed, Handy has written, though too long ago: *'Maybe in its desire to reject the stereotypes of 'organization' and 'management', the voluntary world has a clue to a better order'* (1990, p.1). I would propose that this thesis suggests approaches towards that better organisational order.

6.2.2. – ...for an enriching society

During my inquiry I watched the film Elysium, starring Matt Damon and Jodie Foster (it's not all work you know). It is set in 2154, in a grim future where the very rich and powerful live off the Earth (in both senses) on a vast orbiting space station – Elysium¹²⁴. While the vast majority of the human race exist on the polluted planet; disenfranchised, with no access to the technology or health care of the wealthy, carrying-out degrading and menial work. About twenty minutes in, and before the film slipped into *cliché*, I turned to my wife saying: *"this isn't the future, this is now!"* That might sound rather exaggerated, but consider this:

"Across the world, people are being left behind. Their wages are stagnating yet corporate bosses take home million dollar bonuses; their health and education services are cut while corporations and the super-rich dodge their taxes; their voices are ignored as governments sing to the tune of

¹²⁴ The home of the blessed after death in, you guessed it, Greek mythology and, as a noun, 'A place or state of perfect happiness' (Brown, 1993, p.802).

big business and a wealthy elite.” Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International (Oxfam, 2017)

Klaus Schwab, the founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF), has coined the term *Fourth Industrial Revolution* for the sweeping changes to work being made possible by artificial intelligence and other data advances (Warin & McCann, 2018). WEF’s report *The Future of Jobs* (2016), predicts how this *revolution* will cause a net loss in jobs; primarily from office, manufacturing, and production functions. There is an ongoing debate about what, long-term, these changes might mean for work and society. Some argue that it frees people from menial work and that new work opportunities will open up, while others fear an Elysium-like situation where only plutocrats and a diminishing number of elite workers benefit. Handy opines:

‘The real inequality and unfairness in modern capitalism is going to be the lack of meaningful work for the less skilled and less talented among us, and there are many millions of them.’ (2015, p.160)

In Section 3.1., I referred to the impact of unemployment on lowering well-being. As someone who grew up in the North of England during Thatcherism’s industrial ‘restructuring’, I am conscious of the legacy of social problems caused by it.¹²⁵ Certainly, many have noted the mental health costs of unemployment and diminishing work practices (Harradine, 2014) and I started my thesis with this very point. So, when Ryan Avent (2017) raises the spectre where whole tranches of humanity have limited work opportunities, never mind a chance to flourish through it, the implications for society can be imagined.¹²⁶ Could *enriching workplaces* be able to operate, or even be understood, within such divisive social conditions?

It seems to me, considering the centrality of work (Sub-section 1.3.1.), that **any discourse about work and well-being/flourishing must be linked to a social imperative to enhance society’s experiential quality**. Surely, morally, workplace flourishing should be for all and not for some. Indeed, there is some connection here with the *capabilities approach* of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (Alexander, 2008): *‘She [Nussbaum] is making the point that society as a whole has a responsibility to allow our seeds to grow’* (Handy, 2015, p.164).

¹²⁵ Interestingly *‘high well-being inequality was a strong predictor of an area voting to leave’* the European Union in the United Kingdom’s 2016 EU referendum. Where: *‘Wellbeing inequality is driven by unemployment rates and ‘governance’* (Governance is how people view the quality of society, its functioning and its institutions) (What Works Wellbeing, 2016).

¹²⁶ Also voiced by Yuval Noah Harari (CNN, 2018).

I've conjectured above (Sub-section 1.2.2., & Section 5.2.) on how our ability to *flourish* might be construed as a human right? It is perhaps radical, and a human rights lawyer might *kick this into touch*, but there is enough resonance for me to make this assertion.¹²⁷ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is based on dignity, equality, and fairness; with connections to work and flourishing seen in Articles 23 and 29. If we accept them as a basis and if we are serious that people should have '*an existence worthy of human dignity*' and, within their duty to their community, '*the free and full development of his[/her] personality is possible*' (United Nations Organisation, n.d.). Then by *diminishing* people at work we deny them that basic human right.¹²⁸ It underscores my beliefs about *workplace flourishing* and would augment any debate around it and toward the defining of supportive employment policy.¹²⁹

Despite current employment trends I feel there is hope. From my many conversations I've noticed the genuine interest people have with flourishing, well-being and happiness at work. As you'll see in the final chapter it seeped into the language of the *Peers*. There also appears to be a general broadening of debate and awareness on flourishing related issues (although it could just be that I am more attuned to it). I see headlines like: '*Say goodbye to capitalism: welcome to the Republic of Wellbeing*' (Fioramonti *et. al.*, 2015); or '*Workplace health moves up employers' agenda*' (Jack, 2016).

Governments have been showing interest too. For example, President Sarkozy formed a commission that looked into new ways to measure economic performance and social progress (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009) and in 2015 the Welsh National Assembly passed an act called the *Well-being of Future Generations* (Welsh Government, 2015). Indeed, more-and-more information is being collected on well-being in an effort to set policy goals or to reduce reliance on Gross Domestic Product as an indicator of development.

Some are sceptical of this *turn to well-being* by government and companies, seeing it as a means to control or *marketise* our emotions (Beard, 2015, Berinato, 2015; Davies, 2015). And although I share concerns that well-being or flourishing might become faddish (I note the term is appropriated by spas and health-clubs), I am more positive. Believing that **increasing the conversation around flourishing and**

¹²⁷ As do others, see Illien, 2015.

¹²⁸ Finds an echo in the IHEU's (n.d.) Minimum Statement on Humanism: '*...a democratic and ethical life stance that affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives.*'

¹²⁹ The UN has worked in this area (United Nations Organisation, 2011), plus a grouping of NGOs has recently commissioned a report promoting a treaty on business and human rights (Blackburn, 2018), and the ILO has started discussing a treaty against workplace harassment (Beresford, 2018).

well-being will further cement action towards them in society (Byanyima, 2019), I endeavour to play my part.

I feel the connection from my work-life, working with NGOs, to the furthering of fairness across organisations and society across these sections. This realisation was always there, I think, but I see how my inquiry has made this crystal clear to me. I wouldn't identify it as a calling, more a challenge to my personal authenticity. To put myself into action, beyond an intellectual understanding, to be an expression of my purposes in my work. Without that I think I will remain constrained, perhaps always asking if I could have done more. It spurs me to go further.

Chapter 7. – Reviewing lessons and learnings

When I started these explorations into *human flourishing* and work I honestly didn't know what I would discover. I had no pre-set destination, no theory to prove, just an urging and desire to see if there was a way that I and others might better relate to work. In this final chapter, I present a summary of the main lessons and realisations that have emerged from my inquiry and review these claims against the validity issues discussed in Chapter 2. Following them I examine the implications of the inquiry for myself.

Where I am now *vis-à-vis* my work and my flourishing, the changes I see in myself, and where I believe I might go with this in the future.

Indeed, the attention of my inquiry has been firmly on my own first-person exploration of *workplace flourishing* and the word exploration in the title of my thesis indicates where the outcomes of my inquiry chiefly lie. Most explorer stories comprise elements of intent, unknowing, struggle, revelation, and ultimately how the journey has changed the explorer. Conceivably it is this latter element, the personal discovery, which is the most significant learning for me. Although I hope that in its telling there is merit in it for others.

7.1. – Summary of inquiry outcomes

There are several lessons and realisations that come from the core chapters of my inquiry (3. to 6.). I group them here against my three inquiry aims presented in Section 1.4. These aspirations, for the outcomes of my research, are a useful baseline to review the attainment of my research purposes.

1). Develop understanding and a perspective on workplace flourishing:

I have gained an understanding of what *human flourishing* connotes to beyond the common usage of well-being and happiness. Identifying it for myself, in Chapter 3., as a personal vitality or engagement

with life that is both a process and purpose at the same time. Realising, in Chapter 4., how my sense of *flourishing* is constructed within the inter-related nature of action and reflection of my life experiences. The *ordering* or coherence that Conrad beautifully relates (2011, p.81), and is explored in Dodge *et. al.*, (2012), indicates how: **workplace flourishing for me is the experience of vibrantly engaging through work with the creation of my life**; Socrates's living well (Plato, 1969, p.87). **I flourish when I feel this and I am in the act of it, and am diminished when unable to do so**. Recall my note on my flourishing desert picture at the beginning of Section 3.1.

I better comprehend how work contributes to my *flourishing*, through a **combination of meaning-making, connection, achievement and development**. My *notion of workplace flourishing* illustrated this (Section 3.3.), and its four, then six, conditions, linked with the three facets of my *PPP Motif* and it's nine organisational-supports, form the core of my combined schema of workplace flourishing (Sub-section 6.1.2.).

My further theorising over the *workings* of the processing or assessment of my work-life experiences showed the relationship that I've, tongue-in-cheek, called the *Dark Matter* of flourishing. Simplified it implies that **momentary satisfaction is linked to doing, whilst evaluative satisfaction is linked to growth**. It also, I believe, underlines the centrality of work activities (Arendt's *labour-work-social action* (2000)) to my flourishing overall.

2). Leading to enhanced work practices:

Through my inquiry my *PPP Motif* was further refined into a **pragmatic representation of the main facets of workplace flourishing**. It revealed to me nine key *work-related needs* (Sub-section 6.1.1.), and how I require an *equilibrium* between the different *PPP* facets. When I feel one facet in my work was underdeveloped or undermined, I seemingly find it difficult to flourish. Yet, I understand now how actively realising that equipoise is both a self-defined and necessarily evolving process. These realisations reverberate across what I want from my work and how I do my work. It now serves as a, better-calibrated, **compass to help me orientate myself in my work endeavours**. A notable change between *Figures 1.1., and 6.7.*

While blending personal and organisational facets, the cluster of nine work-related organisational needs grouped under *PPP* (Meaningful work, Living-values, Work-life flexibility/choice; Relatedness, Supervisor behaviour, Solidarity, Self-direction, Growth and development, and Subsidiarity) bring together a workable set of areas to move ahead with and represent tangible leaping-off points for future

practice/inquiry. They underpin several practice outputs of my inquiry: A new component for my OSA tool for NGOs (Section 5.1.), that, rather novelly, allows for a group assessment and discussion of workplace enrichment approaches; and a nascent set of *organising principles for an enriching organisation* (Section 5.4.). My organisational *eutopia*, that frames my manifesto for *workplace flourishing*. Furthermore, some of the inquiry practices (diary-keeping, vignette writing) could conceivably be practices to help others to consider their own work equilibrium.

3). Developed a position on workplace flourishing:

The inquiry has strengthened my belief that for the majority of us **it is through work and in organisations where we mostly engage and interact in society**. The contemporary challenges to careers and working styles (what is being called the *Fourth Industrial Revolution* (World Economic Forum, 2016)) - coming from organisational atavism, labour abundance (Avent, 2017, p.4-8), increased automation, and the advances in artificial intelligence - will bring additional challenges to people's work-lives. It shows that **supporting enriching work and building enriching organisations are an imperative for our societies**. I see enriching lives as a societal and organisational responsibility (I would even go so far as to call it a human right), where people and their needs should be at the heart of organisational design and practices, for the consequences otherwise are too well known (Section 6.2.). It has become my personal manifesto.

7.2. – Critiquing my inquiry claims

The research outcomes, summarised above, were founded on my research approach set out in Chapter 2., and the constructivist-nature of knowledge creation in Sub-section 1.3.2. I have relied on an interwoven and personally-focussed exploration of my topic through three key questions (Section 1.4.). This has allowed the surfacing of ideas, matching the way I think and work, and also expressions of my intent; the condensing and characterising through my *PPP Motif*. Together these provided my thesis with its *Apollonian-Dionysian* cadence.

I truly value what my inquiries has revealed to me, but I believe it is necessary to scrutinise the limitations of my claim by fairly critiquing those approaches that led to them. Indeed, by understanding

that my approach might sit uneasily with others, I recognised my own misgivings in the hybrid nature of my approach and the different *forms of knowledge* that have arisen. This is not some exercise in *self-flagellation*, but rather to be open and to learn. Consequently, under the research validity/credibility criteria presented in Section 2.3., I strive to do so.

1). *Research practice*

Fundamentally any research practice should be appropriate to the subject and the questions being asked; the '*inquiry paradigms being engaged*' (Cho & Trent, 2006, p.320). The exploratory character of my inquiry necessitated a flexibility in approaching – even identifying – the inquiry questions. Indeed, by mirroring it's emergent and personal nature, **my research opportunities necessarily revolved around my work-practice.**

Here I am less concerned about appropriateness of methodology. As I believe the constructivist, qualitative, reflective stance I have attempted rather evolved and formed alongside the inquiry itself. Hence, akin to Seidels' '*symphony based on three notes: Noticing, Collecting, and Thinking...*' (1998, p.1), I could cycle my thoughts, be open to new connections and influences, while keeping a wider-view. Indeed, I do not know how I would have come to the personal understanding I have now if I had tried to elaborate a set hypothesis or truly-conventional approach.

However, in terms of AR practice there some areas where the implementation of my approach might be criticised. I am conscious that, while I worked with clients and involved a *Peer Inquiry Group*, there were really **no opportunities when I could act explicitly on an enriching agenda in an organisation.** It meant that much of the organisational applications I offer present a largely untested premise.

Another issue concerns the extent that an *extended epistemology* was '*...drawn on or allowed to surface...*' (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p.344) in my inquiry. Or, put another way, '*How well is [my] inquiry experientially grounded*' (2006, p.345) so that it expands knowing in various and appropriate forms? It is an area that I **tried to address through my first-person inquiry methods** (Sub-section 2.2.2.1.). Indeed, Reason and Torbert state that researchers '*...can gather evidence of their first-person inquiry competence for their own and others scrutiny*' (2001, p.20).

I trust a certain competence has been evident through the storying of my inquiry, and how my musings and reflections on my work/cases, my paintings and my *vignettes* have supported my findings. Although,

as I cover next, I confess to some qualms over their eventual allocution. Furthermore, I admit that, mainly owing to limits of time and location, I have not extended this practice much to others across my cases or *Peer Inquiry Group*.

That leads to a question on the *quality of the participatory-relationship*; what Bradbury and Reason term as *Relational-Praxis* (2006, p.344). Did it match the inquiry, and how energised and empowered were the participants? I worked infrequently with the *Peers* and outside a traditional inquiry-group, but, within those limits, **all engaged with the topic** (seen in some of their later reactions) and with the diary-keeping's associated reflection. Indeed, much of what I have related come from those discussions.

However, my *clinicalesque* inquiries with clients could not be overt and thus participatory; the inquiry was always my agenda. Though, as Marshall confides: '*...some of my testing is not seeking joint exploration or affirmation from others. Sometimes this would be inappropriate or unlikely, ... So my research is not necessarily consultative*' (2001, p.434). Certainly though, in the future, I would hope to **convene a stronger second-person inquiry** that could take on questions of workplace flourishing. Indeed, one important outcome of my exploration is I am now better placed to raise such an initiative. Perhaps by taking the *Peer Group* approach into something more like a community of practitioners. With those ready to inquire into their own practice and propose feedback into our field.

Beyond these technical aspects, much later in the inquiry process, during the crystallising that supported the writing up, I identified a quandary in my research practice. I felt that **the approach I had adopted, with its *Apollonian-Dionysian* aspects and mixed methods, resulted in very different forms of knowledge being created**. I had *post-conventional* forms resulting from personal reflections of my experiences and changing practice, and more *conventional* forms where my expert-condensing-clarifying way of working (using the *PPP* lens to characterise as I went) led to new notions or schemes. While being created these different forms did not worry me, but when I came to bring them together, or present them, then it was difficult to merge them without favouring one over another.

Certainly, my *PPP Motif*, while a useful connector of my different inquiry angles, did, as I viewed and organised everything through it, perhaps become something of a narrowing lens. Somehow **my need to condense and characterise throughout, to be able to have a handle on what I was creating, will have impacted on the nature of the outcomes**. It might have become self-confirmatory, but I can illustrate where my understanding of it changed:

- I now believe that *Purpose* connects more with the idea of meaning-making through an ongoing sense of ordering of our lives, rather than some sort of great personal mission statement or monument. Indeed, there are many others who have made this connection and seek to proffer ways to determine it; and I would agree ‘...that vocations are grown, and grown into, rather than found or wished’ (Krznaric, 2012, p.132). I also note how *pleasure* became an element here.
- I now understand *Place* as being more strongly related to connections to people than an organisational location. Thus, it contains two dimensions: *People-Place* and *Personal-Place*. Meaning both our connections with others and our connection to our work/place itself (as an organisation and activity).
- My views towards *Practice* as denoting personal growth and competence were strengthened. I see how my work practice contributes to, and is being informed by, my change and development. It is constructed within the process of work; even from less successful events.

2). Research presentation

Creswell and Miller ‘...make the assumption that validity refers not to the data but to the inferences drawn from them’ (2000, p.125). This is important as I’m not looking to data validity *per se*, but rather towards the **validity/credibility of the inferences or conclusions presented**.

Leading on from the quandary of the different *forms of knowledge* being created. I have noted that my attempts to characterise and order the findings coming out from my inquiry, using the *PPP-lens* and my interrogation of literature/theory, possibly gives an impression of me trying to define *universal knowledge*. As I mentioned in Section 2.1., I think this rather reflects the **clarifying presentational-bent of my working-style** (*Apollonian*, expert); to make it more accessible.

It may be unconventional, and sometimes inelegant, but, I believe that attempting to mingle different *forms of knowledge* strengthened my understanding of workplace flourishing. However, in what is fundamentally a propositional form of presentation of finite length, I have **grappled to capture the evolution and multiple sources of inspiration for my findings**. Sadly, much of the *thick description* was necessarily reduced or annexed in this process (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.128-129; Cho & Trent, 2006, p.328-329). And I realised that, through the choices I made to condense it, **the visibility of the cycling of my thoughts, into and out of the conversations, and case work and literature, was unavoidably lessened**.

My efforts to ameliorate this focussed on Lather's four first-person tests – *situated, rhizomatic, reflexive*, and *ironic* (see Section 2.3.). I consciously sought to allow Lather's *four voices* into my text; for example, by bringing in the *Peer Groups'* own words and my later reflections. This thesis is the main vehicle for my research presentation, it is where the external judgement of my success lies; by my findings resonating with the reader.

3). Research purposes

Regarding research purposes **it is in the eventual outcomes or implications - what has changed - that much validity/credibility lies**. Bradbury and Reason demand that we '*...ask pragmatic questions about outcome and practice in our work and consistently strive to be reflexive about this*' (2006, p.344, my emphasis). It is linked to what they call, the *developmental quality* of the work or its *enduring consequence*. They ask how can we show, what I would characterise as, the *knock-on* or *catalytic* effect. Plus, they pose, what I believe is the right question with regard to research purpose: '*...how our work calls forth a world worthy of human aspiration, so that ideally people will say that 'work is inspiring, that work helps me live a better life'*' (2006, p.345).

I believe there are fundamental changes in my own development and practice, which I point to across the thesis and in the section below. These have been subtle and gradual, resulting from what I now understand as was a *change conversation* with myself. I fashioned some new notions/approaches/tools for my work-practice, which I believe are relevant for others in my field. I also give indications where the work has touched others, though this was not my main intent. Fundamentally though, **I hope that my thesis of putting human flourishing at the heart of organisational life, allied to those implications I suggest for organisations and society, is as inspirational for others as it is for me.**

7.3. – Personal implications: *To a future imperfect*

“Dad why don’t you stop studying flourishing and come and play video games with us instead?!”
(Zoia, my eldest daughter, sometime in 2015)

As my thesis originated in those questions I had about my experience of work and career it’s only natural that, by linking back to them, I turn to reflect further on where I feel I am now. Not only from how I understand what in work is important to me, but with regard to **what I learnt about myself and my future hopes to flourish** through my work.

Over the course of my inquiry I have come across a variety of writings and ideas that have acted as mirrors for my reflections or as prompts to my inquiry actions. One of these was a letter, or essay, known as *On the Shortness of Life* by Lucius Annaeus Seneca - Seneca the Younger (finally a Roman!) - written sometime between 48 and 55 CE to his father-in-law Pompeius Paulinus (Williams, 2003, p.19). In it, Seneca sets out his view that **we should use our time wisely and in good activity**: ‘*Life is long enough, and a sufficiently generous amount has been given to us for the highest achievements if it were all well invested*’ (Seneca, 2004, p.1-2).

He believes that *continuously inquiring* is an indispensable part of this good activity: ‘*...learning how to live takes a whole life...*’ (Williams, 2003, p.10). Certainly, some action researchers talk of *living life as inquiry* (Marshall, 1999) and through the activity of my inquiry, and the intent and opportunity that that required, I have realised how my ability to flourish is intimately tied to my own learning and development. Indeed, by primarily attending to my first-person research questions and addressing ‘*issues of personal and professional change*’ (Reason & McArdle, 2008, p.7), my inquiries have themselves afforded a process for my own personal flourishing.

Inquiring into my personal relationship with work is a learning pathway that I have wanted to follow for some time. Where exploring my work through the *convenient label* of human flourishing provided a way to do so. Indeed, this has very much been about discovering the territory and inner-workings of my own flourishing, as much as about scouting the broader fields; that outer landscape associated with my topic.

Recently, while developing this thesis, I considered those changes I felt in myself through a free-fall writing exercise; they included **increased: hopefulness, agency, surety, engagement, craft, and knowledge**. The *degree of change* for these areas was I felt uneven and for some I would wish for more

development. However, they indicated how this life of inquiry was contributing, if incrementally, to an enhanced sense of work-sourced flourishing in myself. This is a long-handed way of underlining that **the process of learning, facilitated by conducting my research, this *personal change conversation*, is an encompassing outcome for me.** It was time well spent and worth doing. Related to one of my inquiry's focuses, this begs two questions of me: what do I now understand of my own flourishing through work and what do I seemingly need to do for me to flourish further?

As I asked myself these questions, late on, I also asked the *Peers* where they are now and how they relate to our *notion of workplace flourishing*. Some of their words resonate with my own and I was heartened by Andreas's precise summary:

'What I can say is that what you write about flourishing very much resonates with me. It is in many ways fundamental to my management style, or at least to the management style that I aspire to. As for my own life, as I get older, I am ever more conscious of the importance of what you write for myself -- for the meaning of my work and life. Am I flourishing? Hard to say... What I do know is that absent those qualities, I almost certainly would not flourish. They are conditions for flourishing. And that in itself is important to realise.' (A. Beckmann, personal communication, January 29, 2018)

Liz assessed also her situation against them, summarising:

'I guess what is emerging from these ramblings is the fact that yes, I need the elements you have identified. And in order to get them, and maximise them, I need to have more structure, and discipline in place!' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 7, 2018)

Indeed, noting how my combined *notion of workplace flourishing* and *PPP* have **become a sort of compass for me to evaluate my work and flourishing**, it is perhaps appropriate to follow them as a guide to my reflections on where am I now and where can I go?

Purpose – meaning, values, balance

It is easy to say, but hard to demonstrate, how I've felt a difference - a shift - in how I think about my life, my work, and the people around me (much is covered in Section 6.1.). Indeed, I've noted a keener sense of personal direction, understanding, clarity of purpose, and a renewed conviction in my work. I find a definite echo in Richard Williams's statement: *'I sense that my experience of being, in the more general sense of how I live my everyday life, is in transformation as a result of my extended engagement with new ways of thinking about life in organizations'* (2005, p.45). But how is that?

I now understand more clearly that the sense of *work-located activism* in me, though quiet and supportive, connects very deeply to what I value. From the cases, especially JUPITER and SATURN, I saw how I link strongly to the people/staff in organisations and their requirements to flourish. This has genuine personal meaning for me that goes beyond the organisational purposes and management needs of what I do. Thus, I recognised my desire, even a responsibility, to promote issues around human flourishing at work and engender better workplaces. Even though I realise that sometimes my position could be seen to be too radical by my clients, it relates to my personal values. It is an itch that really needs scratching and I believe I wouldn't flourish without serving this *Purpose-need* at some level.

However, in terms of work-life choice, I have had a sense that what I have been doing in my recent work has somehow been limited in its scope; perhaps too staid. I saw how some of my previous experiences provided a necessary vibrancy to what I was doing:

'...I think when it comes to my sense of flourishing that I perhaps need some adventure, change, or variety. It is rather about a sense of really living. In a way with all the senses opened and with the potential there to feel the change in myself as it happens.' (See Vignette 13: War Stories, Annex 2.1)

While I've almost felt envy towards those colleagues with the opportunity to contribute to more enduring work, I now see my need is about more than just novelty. It is about having authentic opportunities to act, to be *political*, to take an active part in society. This is a feature of who I am and I must look to orientate my work to provide more meaningful challenges.

For me the overall implication from these *Purpose* lessons and realisations can be characterised as **an enhanced awareness of how my work contributes to the ordering of my life, and my role in that ordering**. Indeed, the inquiry itself underlined for me how the evident *ordering-process* and sense-making I used throughout, my need for coherence, is both an expression of how I work and, seemingly, a big part of how I flourish too (it may be different for others). If I had to summarise the shift in myself I would say I was developing **a greater feeling of wholeness towards my work/career, coupled with a combination of patient activism and renewed humbleness**.

Place - relationships, mentoring, fairness

A pervading realisation from my inquiry has been my strong *Place*-related needs. Both in terms of my connections to the organisations I work with and their aims (my connections in the URANUS case, see Section 4.1.) and with other persons; allies and fellow travellers (with Christiane in the PLUTO case,

Vignette 11, Working together, Section 6.1.2.). A big part of my connection with others comes from the nature of my engagement. Such as the mentoring supporting role that I value:

'I have been fortunate to have had some colleagues and bosses, like Przem, who have helped me to develop, by giving chances, stretching me and giving feedback; true mentoring (big thanks to: Zbig, Duncan, Alex, and Jernej). In the meantime, I feel that this role has passed to me and I look to be someone who knows when to encourage and when to intercede; and guides more than commands, and takes responsibility when it's needed.' (*Vignette 14: Honouring Przem*, Annex 2.1.)

But also, the sense of solidarity with others and the need for fairness in the organisations I inhabit. Without that I've realised I cannot connect well to such inauthentic workplaces. It becomes an anathema to me, I have to escape it (see *Vignette 2: The Final Staff Meeting*, Sub-section 1.2.1.). Although, having had several negative leader experiences, I am mindful that I can potentially over-problematise this issue. In the past I've had to *fight* for my team and thus perhaps this has become a default in me; to initially defend and be less open.

Across my inquiry I've reflected on what these feelings say of the work I do now; the free-lance OD consultant, often working in isolation or vicariously through others. I wondered, as was revealed by my *Red-Gold Halls* image (*Figure 6.2.*), is it enough for me? Can I gain the necessary contributions to my *Place-needs* through my work-locations? Might it lead to confinement in my practice or co-option of my purposes where I see the workplace is inauthentic?

Indeed, there are instances from my case studies where these questions were at the front-and-centre of my attention; highlighting their importance for me. Fundamentally though, noting the discussions with Francesca in *Vignette 10: Mentoring Myself* (Sub-section 6.1.1.), my **need to engage more with others and in diverse, longer-term activities** has become an orientating theme for my own future flourishing. Appreciating that I want to contribute more, to be authentically connected, and feel energised to grow and flourish with others.

Practice – growth, development, freedom

Indeed, as I explored my work practice through my inquiry, I was often asking myself whether I was flourishing through it? From my case studies and reflections, I saw that I do. Although I've noted I connect it to those fleeting events that I've enjoyed. The sensation of actions that went well and the linked camaraderie, **where I felt attuned to the in-the-moment importance of my work**. Like the good delivery of a workshop (see *Vignette 7: The Presentation*, Section 4.3.).

But, I've understood that something was missing. Hence, while I am mostly satisfied in my work-life, I don't feel I am flourishing through my current work perhaps as much as I hope for. Specifically, I've realised that, as mentioned above, **I have a sensation of wanting to go further, missing the vibrancy I crave.** I've supposed that my recent work practice has felt perhaps too safe, too contained and without enough energy. I realise **I need more of a growth challenge in a practice context that has purpose for me.**

Indeed, I've felt much of my work does miss this developmental potential. The sense of dynamism or absorption, which I seemingly expect, was gained as I worked with URANUS and PLUTO, but was lacking with JUPITER, SATURN and NEPTUNE. With time passing I'm troubled, with this feeling of being stuck *on the beach*.¹³⁰ Somehow practicing, but not fully engaged and anxious if I ever will. Tolstoy encapsulates my feeling perfectly: *'It now seemed absolutely clear that all his life experience would count for nothing if he failed to make practical use of it by starting to lead an active life again'* (2007, p.459). Laura mentioned something of this for herself:

'...what I now need to do is find a way to attribute meaning to smaller endeavours - work that changes lives locally maybe (?) - with a way of making a living where the exchange between effort and income feels right and one where I sense my practice is developing. As I write this, I recognise that that last component is the thing that has been most missing from my current contract - interesting... and a validation of your principles I feel!' (L. Lewin, personal communication, January 30, 2018).

In other words, I feel my freedom to act or grow is constrained where my work restricts or limits my options to grow or broach new things. Why execute this inquiry if I cannot enact what I find it tells me?

This sentiment is connected to a theme I observed as I examined my *Practice-needs*, that is **this desire to be the expert, to always know more.** I discuss it in Section 6.1.1., and while it is perhaps a driver linked to my flourishing - to always want to learn and grow, I also realise there is an adverse aspect to this characteristic. That is, that I notice I find it hard to celebrate work success or enjoy that development more than fleetingly. Once something is done I am already onto the next thing or analysing what might have been done better, looking to the negative rather than the good. I am my own toughest critic. It drives me, but it also consumes me, where I scorn my lack of competence. It can be an arduous place for me and my co-workers (and doctoral supervisors).

¹³⁰ To explain, I have an interest in all things nautical, especially the sailing navy of the late 18th, early 19th centuries. Then, with too many captains and too few ships, many were put into reserve for years-on-end, thus: *on the beach*.

I've had to think about this quirk, one that can translate to never being good enough. I think something of the root of this comes from my childhood and the school-generated fear of being wrong. It has been exacerbated by some of the difficult times I've experienced at work, where the environment was so toxic that making any mistake would be used against me or my team. This twisted the idea of learning and growth to a level where needing more expertise was about needing to always be right and so not to be caught out. In my head I understand that **one can never know everything** and what this twisting of my drive to be more expert has meant, yet in my gut it is hard to let it go. Something to work on in terms of my own sense of flourishing, to enjoy and embrace my growth through my work-practice.

Recognising a dark side to flourishing

Unexpectedly, these realisations have disclosed to me how **there is a dark side to my workplace flourishing stance**. Not by languishing that comes from diminishing experiences, but **from the pressure I put on myself by my expectation to flourish**. Indeed, when I started to consider the lessons from my inquiry, I noted that when I talked of it to people that I sensed in them an expectancy that I had discovered some secret knowledge about life and work. Either that or some brilliant 'work hacks' that could forever sever the Gordian Knot of workplace misery. I supposed that an outcome of my inquiries should be that I would find, and be able to exhibit, this great work-life myself.

Coming from this perceived external pressure, I'd realised a growing inner concern to fulfil that expectation, both in terms of that public demonstration and for my own proof. It presented itself to me as a burden, a lack in myself if things are not lining-up.¹³¹ Could I follow what my *PPP-compass* tells me or am I expecting too much? Indeed, as I was struggling with this, I read Alain de Botton's book *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (2015) and something he wrote struck an unhappy chord:

'...for most of us, our bright promise will always fall short of being actualised', and '...aware of the unthinking cruelty discreetly coiled within the magnanimous bourgeois assurance that everyone can discover happiness through work and love. It isn't that these two entities are invariably incapable of delivering fulfilment, only that they almost never do so. ... and condemns us instead to solitary feelings of shame and persecution for having stubbornly failed to become who we are.' (2015, p.127-128)¹³²

¹³¹ There is some research which indicates that in searching for happiness we may find it more elusive (Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino, 2011; Robson, 2018).

¹³² He refers to a quote commonly attributed to Sigmund Freud: *"Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness"* (Elms, 2001).

Initially these lines felt crushing when coupled to my inner-pressure to embody a flourishing work-life. Was my propounding of workplace flourishing an ultimately flawed premise? Had I deceived myself, was I equivocating, still chasing rainbows and looking for a utopia? That never satisfied, I won't find myself and my meaning in my work: *'Lives dominated by impossible ideals, complete honesty, absolute knowledge, perfect happiness, eternal love are experienced as continuous failure'* (Jeffries, 2006, quoting Philips, 1999).

As I reflected further, I felt deeply uncomfortable about the idea that work fulfilment, meaning or purpose was ultimately an illusion. It was something that I had to investigate further and it is perhaps timely, following these confessions, to introduce the painting I made towards the end of my inquiry to investigate where I feel I am now (Figure 7.1.).

Figure 7.1: On the verge (Created late-2018)



It was painted toward the end of my inquiry and shows a large plain with a pathway – my flourishing pathway - heading off into the distance. I had thought of a winding trail going up mountains, but I didn't see the way ahead as a struggle. The clouds are not heavy, and I've not drawn the path leading to some sort of sunset or sunrise. I also note that the plain is not barren, it shows that there could be many ways across it. So, no endpoints are denoted, just a way, a variety of ways, ahead. But, I've placed the

viewer's perspective *off-the-path*, on its margins in the green-brown parts. Perhaps revealing of my sensation that I am close to the path I desire, but not quite on it.

Then it struck me that, in my view, de Botton and Philips - and my own pressure - were coming from that static position of achieving targets (the edifice, the legacy, the single-calling). Something that, even while it lures me, I'd earlier felt to be flawed and had dismissed. **My notion of workplace flourishing is not about an elusive perfection, but is linked to an ongoing dynamic process of ordering of the multiple purposes open to us.** And that is really very different. Maybe it is possible for me, most of us, by remaining forward-looking, to find coherence in the continuing personal learning and development that I think flourishing implies.

Greece and Greeks feature through this thesis so it is perhaps apt that another does in these endings. I came across the poems of Constantine Cavafy in a bookshop in Athens and, having just visited the island and recalling my boyhood joy in the *Odyssey*¹³³, connected to his poem *Ithaca*. To focus on the journey and not the destination has become a cliché of common wisdom and is found in this poem. Yet it is Cavafy's understanding that Ithaca – the travellers' target - is ultimately a poor destination which marks it out: '*And though you find her poor, she has not misled you; you having grown so wise, so experienced from your travels, by then you will have learned what Ithacas means*' (Sharon, 2008, p.34).

Indeed, to me my painting signifies the acceptance that **my flourishing revolves around developing meaning through a constantly-evolving, continuously-ordering journey or process.** My work is a large part of that, with all the conflicts, tension and disappointments that that can entail. There is never a perfect endpoint to that meaning-making or a single-way one can do so (or job or career). It helps answer a question I had been toying with: '*what if I was immortal, where comes my purpose?*' I think surely it would be in constantly developing myself. And, it is from that perspective where I now try to place my trust and where I will at times (hopefully more than not) be on a good path in my work-life; although, a little more vibrancy to it would seemingly not go amiss.

¹³³ The subject of which is Odysseus's ten-year journey to return to his home island of Ithaca.

Concluding

It might appear an odd way to finish a thesis, but now I feel I am now ready to start my inquiry. I believe that I have set the ground for it and **I feel able to inquire differently, with a language and a more clearly defined basis to what I now wish to effect though my work-practice.** It prompts the title of this last section: *To a future imperfect*, by referring to the positions I have developed through my inquiry for the work I will do in the future. But what future?

Well, I've recognised how I've become more *politicised* or activated and, shown by the personal manifesto that I hold, realise that I must work to my own values. Indeed, I look at what is going on in organisations in a different light, mindful of the damage that diminishing work-patterns can cause. I recognise myself in Bjørner Christensen's explanation of his consulting role, where he opens-up conversation spaces and highlights power relations in organisations (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p.74-103). And, while I am aware of the limits of change and the hazards of *parrhesia* (speaking truth to power (Foucault, 1983; Reitz & Higgins, 2017)), where possible I contrive to rid the organisations I work with of *diminishment* and to help foster *enrichment*.

Indeed, I recognise how **much of my personal and professional approach now firmly, but gently, places human flourishing at the heart of my work.** I want to help people, especially in my field, to engage with the idea of *workplace flourishing*. Spreading this understanding to others and raising the idea of enriching organisations.¹³⁴ Taking this knowledge and asking tough questions, like: why do so many mission-led, civil society organisations act towards their staff in ways that go against their values? I want to **find ways to talk openly about that alternate organisational purpose of flourishing.** Looking to help organisational leaders to be responsive to how people can flourish at work: '*...to make life more worth living for the employees you serve*' (Cable, 2018, p172-173).

As such, I feel the future direction of my work-practice is focussed towards what I call the *hardware and software* of workplace flourishing. Where the *hardware* is the work done on the organisational level (from organising principles to organisational practices, policies, and approaches), but is tempered by a contemplation of what we are really trying to achieve in organisations. And the *software* is the work done with people around awareness-raising of and commitment to workplace flourishing. Helping to find ways where, individually, each might be able to reference their own *flourishing-needs*. Having

¹³⁴ I believe that the transfer of these *PPP* ideas might be more effectively communicated via a series of images that express the emotion or connections in them in ways that words and practices would not.

conversations, like those I had with the *Peers*, would seem to be an important part of creating a consciousness around workplace flourishing. Or offering my *PPP-compass* as a prompt, but not a recipe, for others to find out for themselves. Adriana's words give me sustenance:

'...since we have started this discussion around your doctoral topic and the first interview, the idea of flourishing at work never left me. I now often times see practices at work or among the organisations I support and can't stop myself observing that either 'that is not a flourishing practice' or think about 'what could I do to make that practice more flourishing?' I am also in a position to share your ideas with other organisations than my own and you would be happy, but probably not surprised, to hear that all of them would like to know more and are open to knowing/learning how flourishing practices can help construct a better workplace.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, January 31, 2018)

Indeed, it is a powerful motivation for me, with a strong echo in the diminishing experiences I have had, but leading to a stimulus to claim back the positive in my work. *Coming back to life* to transcend past anger and be forward looking. And realising that this *future imperfect* will depend very much on my own exertions, which are expressed in the words that I have come to view as a personal motto ***carpe diem, carpe vitam***. Hence, I am looking to take my ideas forward with others and endeavour to develop deeper connections to the organisations I work with. Related to my *Place* image (*Figure 6.2.*), this *sparrow wants to stay longer in the hall* and spend his time wisely whilst doing so.

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Annex 0.1. – Personal ethics statement

In undertaking a research project to study and inquire into ‘Enriching Organisations’, within a research project being carried out for the Doctorate in Organisational Change at Ashridge Business School and the University of Middlesex, I undertake to carry out that project along good ethical practice (fairness) throughout the research and in line with the Research Ethics required by Ashridge Business School’s Research Ethics Committee. As such an ethics statement has been prepared and submitted to this committee for review and approval (January 2014).

In practice this means throughout the project to consider the ethical implications of the research activities undertaken - as presented in that ethics statement - and notably that the activities would not lead to the actual, or potential, ‘diminishing’ of the participants from a personal or professional perspective (formal or non-formal). This includes the active consideration in the development of the research activities to reduce the potential for: reality distortion (misrepresentation, unstated frames and assumptions); a reinforcement of passivity (non-participatory/democratic); and the nullifying of the ‘voice’ of participants.

Formal Inquiry:

- Agreement of participants (as part of a formal inquiry or for quotation) will be secured before the research commences or quotes are utilised.
- Data and Records: Any meetings, recordings or transcripts of the Inquiry Group will be kept secure and access is freely available to participants.

Informal Inquiry:

- Confidentiality will be observed at all times, and no names or any attributable connection to those persons or organisations will be revealed; being responsible towards the 'subjects'.
- Explicitly that the presentation of content and interpretation of their meaning from any non-formal aspects is all mine (placed into a first-person realm).

This personal ethics statement is a personal commitment to ensure that the research carried out with an integrity that is both ethical and responsible toward all persons and organisations touched by it.

Robert Atkinson, ADOC4

Annex 2.1. – Additional Vignettes

Vignette 12: Live Time (Reflection: written late-2015, recalling the early/mid-1990's)

In the last few years, as I've been rediscovering what I want from what I don't want, I have been revisiting my past: revisiting my pastimes – walking, football, painting, visiting my friends – and engaging with new ones; revisiting my excitements – travel, live music.

But what is this, a rediscovery, a reinvention or just a mid-life crisis? I feel a need to breathe and to spread into doing other things; making life richer, not fuller. Enriching and not filling with distractions - avoiding *bread and circuses* - to be broader; more whole.

During a business trip I visited my parents. I took an extra case with me to pick up those few books and ephemera of my life still left with them. These are things from before the time I left the country, over twenty-years ago. Stuff I valued, enough to keep, but not enough for them to catch-up with me in that time. Or perhaps I didn't find enough reasons for them to catch-up with my evolving life story. Stuff left behind.

I went through a box of packets of photos; all from before the digital age, dusty. A mix of sizes and finishes; colour, black and white, and sepia prints. A ten-year record of my years from eighteen to twenty-seven. From a time before the mobile phone camera, where we now record almost all our waking moments, but a time when a film camera seemed to be always at hand. Records of real life: parties, hanging-out and holidays.

At first, I just flipped through them, knowing I couldn't possibly bring back a whole stack of photos and negatives. Then I went back and started to take out the good ones – cherry picking. I noticed that they were almost exclusively of people, sure a few of my college digs and the odd landscape, but no, mainly of people.

A pattern emerged of the people I truly loved, and those I love now; friends current and lost. Snaps of the lads I partied with or went to football or gigs with; to my fellow interns in Cambridge. The colleagues at the conservation centre or in London; plus, their children, so small then, with their rounded-noses and tiny hands, and who are all now in their twenties; the age I am in these pictures.

And images of the girls I loved – names, songs, scents – with fixed smiles, characteristic looks captured, some moments I actually recall, and which still seem fresh and alive; they bring a lurch of remembered raw emotions, a melancholic happiness. The pictures of a birthday weekend, a fresh faced me, can of beer and a cigarette in one hand, embracing a friend with the other. All of them now past and remote. Yet there is an odd remorse I feel at bringing them back; a sense of disequilibrium.

I wonder is it that I want this time again, even when in my head I know this is from before now, another time. And I know that this perceived vibrant time, this *live time*, is really a faux-history, one that never really was how I remember it, or it is how I would wish it to be remembered. In effect a self-edited hagiography that's sum or parts in reality didn't really add up in the lived moment, only in the retrospect, and so a mirage. What does that say to my sense of a life well-lived, if the moments did not add-up, but the recollection does? Perhaps though is it actually that illusion and my reflection on it that is speaking to a contemporary wish for a *live time* to claim and create now and in the future?

Vignette 13: War Stories (Reflection: written early-2016, recalling mid-1999)

In the spring and summer of 1999, the Balkans convulsed again in one of its, sadly, periodic wars. The ethnic Albanians of Kosovo were fighting an insurgency against the oppressive Serbian government led by Slobodan Milosevic; NATO intervened. I was the manager of the offices for an international environmental organisation that were impacted by this conflict; in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia. Following the cease-fire, I was involved in a UNEP mission into Serbia and Kosovo to assess the environmental damages caused by the war.

My boss Alex had joined the mission a few days before, but I was unable to until later. So, Jani, our driver, agreed to take me down from Budapest to join the mission outside Kragujevac in central Serbia. The drive takes about a day and we noted the lack of traffic on the roads. We also noticed the NATO bomb damage to bridges and, when we entered Belgrade, the effects of the missile-strikes on ministry buildings. We picked up Dragana, our Serbian representative, at her home and continued south until we joined the mission.

When we arrived I met Alex and the UN staff. It was a mix of nationalities with technical people from various German Länder and Danish institutes, as well as other UN employees. There was also Rob, a

Dutch employee of UNEP, who did the honours and signed me up as UN employee. He asked me to sign my UN contract – pay was one dollar, which I never got – gave me my UN T-shirts, hat and overalls, and he told me:

“When you sign this, you have no country and no past.”

I signed it, thinking:

‘As long as I have a future.’

The following day we headed further south to Niš. It was remarkable the amount of damage to infrastructure that had been done by the NATO strikes. Several times we had to come off the highway and go onto rough roads as the junctions had been destroyed. When we got to Niš the mission headed to a transformer station that had been hit several times; first by graphite bombs (full of small spools of graphite thread that shorted out the electricity) and then precision missiles.

Alex and I were sent off to interview the town council. I recall having a feeling of disquiet when we arrived to be met by a crowd of people milling about outside the city hall. TV and radio media were present and there was a charged atmosphere. We were highly conspicuous in our UN branded clothing, all white with blue logos, but we strode in trying to look confident - our sunglasses helped. We sat down at a massive table with about thirty people around it, we were offered coffee, and started to go through our set questions. Alex led the discussion, through our interpreter, and I looked around the table at the suspicious - or was that angry - faces. I couldn't help thinking, despite our UN status, that both of our countries were amongst those bombing these people a few weeks ago.

The next day Alex left with Jani and I joined the mission group heading to Pristina the Kosovar 'capital'. In effect we had to cross the lines between the Serbian forces and the NATO troops. As our van was registered in Belgrade, and there had been some shooting in Kosovo on Serbians, we took the plates off the mini-bus and loaded up extra fuel. Our Serbian driver was very nervous, despite the big UN symbols on the side. I sat in the back row with Dragana and Elisabeth, a chemicals specialist from the UK. On the way out of town we nearly had an accident and I put my belt on, the ladies laughed, but followed suit. About ten kilometres further we half ran into a ditch and everyone else did the same. Dragana and Elisabeth and I smiled at one another, while I mouthed *‘see, I told you’*.

As we got closer to Kosovo there was more evidence of the fighting; a radio mast slewed over at a crazy angle, the bridges all destroyed, so we had to cross rivers on concrete pipes laid in the water and

covered with hard-core. Soon we reached Serbian army positions, past their checkpoint we came to militia, then normal police, and finally Russian Special Forces. Fifty meters up the road was a British Army check-point manned by the Household Cavalry (I still wonder if James Blunt was there). I have to admit that seeing them and hearing familiar accents was a pretty good moment. Interestingly after we came back the same way Dragana said that she'd never before been so happy to see a Serbian policeman.

Once we were in Kosovo, as in Bosnia before, it was sobering to see what it means when society 'goes wrong.' We drove through villages devastated by purposeful and wanton destruction; homes stripped of everything useful, even the brick within the concrete frames, or daubed with slogans: "*Arkan was right!*"¹³⁵ The city and its approaches were full of NATO troops and vehicles from all nationalities: British paratroopers, French legionnaires, Turks, Canadians, Germans, Italian Carabinieri, and loads of Americans; while overhead Apache and Blackhawk helicopters circled. It was like being an extra in a war film, only this was real. The tanks, British Challengers, were perhaps the most frightening, moving around with tracking guns, people unseen, like some prehistoric beasts.



British Paratroopers in Pristina: my snap from the back of the UN van

¹³⁵ *Nom de guerre* of Željko Ražnatović a notorious leader of Serbian paramilitaries; since assassinated.

In Pristina I had arranged to meet an ethnic-Albanian NGO activist to ask him to work with us, but as my Serbian colleague, Dragana, had an elderly aunt still in the city I agreed to take her with me. We didn't tell the UN people we were with, as they would probably have blocked it. She is blond, and 'masqueraded' as a Hungarian, only speaking English, and when we met our contact we headed out to her aunt's house. The old lady was safe, and while the two relatives discussed whether she would leave Kosovo, our Albanian friend and I conducted an interview in the garden; smoking and drinking coffee and Slivoviča¹³⁶; while polluting Yugos and armoured vehicles rumbled past the fence and flower beds. In this surreal situation I rather felt proud about breaking the rules for my folk.

After we finished, we joined the others to survey a destroyed fuel depot and a bombed factory. I had a impromptu conversation about football with a British corporal from Derby. And then we took the van back to Niš. When we arrived in the centre the town was full of people all heading one way. There was a political demonstration with the populist leader Vuk Draskovic speaking that evening. Our UN lead, decided to park the van where we were and he instructed us to remove our UN badges and cover up our clothing. I walked alongside Dragana and whispered to her *"so now it's my turn to pretend to be someone else."* I winked at her when she broke into a smile and said *"okay now I'll only speak to you in Serbian."*

When we got to the hotel we watched from the restaurant balcony as speaker after speaker denounced NATO and their own leaders. Then there was a roar from the crowd, a sea of people, when Draskovic came out to speak. Finally, we headed back to Belgrade, where the findings would be collated. It was strange being housed in an enormous room in the Hilton, all marble bathrooms and soft towels, after the more rustic accommodation we'd had. We also mingled with journalists covering the story for the world's media, CNN, NBC, BBC etc. It was then that I finally called my parents and told them where I was, interestingly they weren't that concerned.

These experiences helped me to clarify much about my position as a supervisor, co-worker, and in working with our clients or stakeholders. It sharpened my sense of what mattered to me in my work; that of supporting others. I find it hard to express but there is something centrally important to this. I suppose it complements John Foster's explanation of finding intrinsic value in the transactions of a lived

¹³⁶ Plum brandy.

life; a ‘...value that stands firm for me, things mattering in a way I can’t get behind, explain away or fall into seeing in a merely conditioned perspective’ (2008, p.94-95).

There is a famous quote from Samuel Johnson that reads: *"Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea."* I know that I would have been a particularly bad choice in the military, but I think that the quote perhaps speaks more to me as the desire to find real challenge adventure and excitement in life – an authenticity.

There is a question here, I think, in relation to flourishing and about taking chances or risks, about doing something different, something perhaps unsafe. Though I think for me taking a risk also requires a reason, which might speak to one’s purpose, or place, or practice. But that is quite individual. For example, I have a friend who loves to skydive; for me that is an unnecessary risk, something I don’t need. Or to come back to our quote, while I can perhaps understand the pride and daring in a military career, those choice restrictions it represents to me would be too much.

If I consider my ‘war story’ it is pretty lame compared with many of the experiences of my colleagues and peers. I have had friends who have experienced much more dangers. But, I think when it comes to my sense of flourishing that I perhaps need some adventure, change, or variety. It is rather about a sense of really living. In a way with all the senses opened and with the potential there to feel the change in myself as it happens.

Vignette 14: Honouring Przem (Reflection: written early-2016, recalling late-1991)

While working on my inquiry I heard of the death of a dear friend, Przemyslaw Czajkowski. Przem was a Polish NGO activist that I worked with in the early nineties and had kept in infrequent touch with over the intervening years.

On behalf of Solidarity he had been involved in the environmental talks with the failing communist regime and following ‘89 carried out work to support the nascent civil movements. He was a geographer, he liked football and cigarettes, and loved women. He was twice my age then, a paternal figure, but we hit it off immediately. He was a complex, but brilliant person, with that peculiar talent of the Poles to be incredibly passionate and coolly intellectual all at the same time. He told great human

stories, dressed in baggy sweaters, and, despite his nicotine stained fingers and moustache, was oddly suave. People just liked him, I think I wanted to be him.

I recall in the winter of 1992 travelling across Poland with him and two others to an NGO conference in Silesia. He drove, as always, in his diminutive Polski Fiat. Four guys, all around six-foot, chain smoking the whole seven hours. There was as much fog in the car as outside and in the winter dark the countryside seemed drained of colour, everything in monochrome.

At some point in the conference (held in Polish), the discussion became heated. I was sat next to Przem and he was shifting in his seat, clearly uncomfortable. At some point, he cleared his throat and raised his hand. The chair gave him the floor. He spoke slowly, quietly, almost drawling in his gravelly voice, the voices became quiet, the young bloods looked a bit chastised. There was a murmur of agreement and the conference chair moved a motion and, in a visibly more relaxed mood, the discussion continued. I leaned over to him and whispered: *“What did you say?”*

“I told them that we were wasting time on this point of order, that it was really not that important, and if they were looking for someone to blame then it was all my fault and they could blame me. And then I asked if we could now get on?”

Of course, his words showed that they were missing the point, but it took his wisdom to see what really mattered and the strength of character to bridge the problems without causing offence. Pure leadership; an inspiring lesson.

I have been fortunate to have had some colleagues and bosses, like Przem, who have helped me to develop, by giving chances, stretching me and giving feedback; true mentoring (big thanks to: Zbig, Duncan, Alex, and Jernej). In the meantime, I feel that this role has passed to me and I look to be someone who knows when to encourage and when to intercede; and guides more than commands, and takes responsibility when it's needed.

Such a mentoring role is challenging, complex and difficult, but it's a role that I value in its effects and in the returns that I get from those I work with (like those that still write 'boss' on my birthday). It coincides with my practice, but more than that it connects me with people. It's about showing my ability. And when it works, it feels like I'm honouring Przem.

Vignette 15: Five Meetings, Five Cities, Five Years (Reflection: written late-2017, recalling work from 1995 to 2007)

In the civil society field, there is a sense of seeking fairness, equality and transparency in what we do. Certainly, in the way decisions are made and how they come about. It hasn't always been easy to do that throughout my career and perhaps being unskilled or naïve there are times when I've been accused of making unfair decisions. At other times, I felt I haven't had the strength to resist these decisions; some of these still bother me.

Through the following five meetings something of the development of my position towards fairness and my ability to *talk truth to power*, to say my piece, comes out. It has become an underlying position I take, both in the work I do (and I strive to be fair and honest), but also for the way I believe organisations should be. I'm not perfect, but I try. This connects with *Purpose* strongly, but also echoes into *Place* and has *Practice* implications.

1996, Kosice, Regional NGO meeting: I'm leaving the stand and I'm processing the reactions. Most of the two hundred faces seem satisfied, especially the Hungarians, but the Czech NGOs are pissed. We've cut their available grant fund, I've cut their available grant fund. There weren't enough proposals from them, better the funds go to where there is demand. I'm left with how I might have done this better. I think I'm right, but perhaps I am not.

1997 Sofia, Regional programme meeting: I'm bewildered, our donor just announced that our programme was cut. Why did I come here? Three-days, no words from them, and now this; announced in plenary. Why haven't they consulted with us, why this surprise? Speechless, I simply can't raise my voice, I don't know what it means for my work. It doesn't sink in. They promise that it will be there for the following round, should I protest now? Others ask questions, stunned at this and the other items that have been cut. I feel like a coward unable to raise my hand.

1999, Ohrid, Regional NGO meeting: There are moments when you just want to give up. I take a coffee, I see people avoiding me. I sit down, my hand tremors a little as I raise the cup. Bloody hell, we came to offer a way into the process, a way to get a voice at the governments' table,

but the NGOs can only criticise. This is a way for them to really influence the decisions on tens of millions worth of environmental investments, fuck it!

Then a colleague from a German foundation sits next to me. He smiles kindly, he can see I'm disturbed:

"Don't worry, it's the same for us. Whatever we do they'll complain. I think they are just covering up their fears at not being able to contribute. It's a sort of reflex, makes them feel better."

I cadge a cigarette off him. Then I see my boss across the room, also the subject of the grilling in front of hundreds of people. He looks my way and winks conspiratorially and gives me the thumbs up. 'Yep', I think, *'never any thanks, but we'll keep trying.'* I smile and wink back, thinking: *'what a bloody job!'*

2003, Vienna, NGO Supporters Consultation Meeting: We're in a coffee break. I'm feeling quite relaxed, picking-up my papers, the presentation of our work was received really well. I was calm and it was measured. I'm rising from my chair, one of twelve others in a classically 'equal' circle, when Dennis comes over to me. He's the moderator, but I've heard he's hostile to my organisation. I've never met him before. He says:

"People, are saying they liked what you said. It was clear and reasonable what you are trying to do with your support."

I nod my thanks, closing my bag, He goes on:

"Then why do you think the NGOs hate your organisation?"

He has a wry look on his face, looking for my reaction. Once I would have been thrown by his accusation, now I'm not, it's boring. I also realise it's what he's believed for years and now he was surprised by what I had to say. I tell him:

"I don't think we are hated, it's just we are perceived to have power, and we have to make decisions. A lot of this goes back to perceptions and expectations of the past, when we were set up, and now there is a lack of willingness to revisit that."

"But, is your work still necessary? Maybe donors should be doing it directly?"

“Look, many NGOs think we use up money that should be for them. We don’t. Actually, we are leveraging money from donors for the NGO movement. As you heard we are trying to fulfil the needs we see, it’s not perfect, but we think it’s helpful. We do our work to the best of our abilities. I’m not going to worry too much about convincing everyone otherwise.”

2007 Brussels, European Commission NGO Consultation: I was last to speak and there was a good debate with some probing questions. I am relaxing as the Commission’s moderator starts to summarise the session and look for a closing. Then he says:

“Before the session I have prepared some conclusions that I will share with my Commission colleagues on the discussions today. I hope we can all stand behind them.”

Boom! Immediately microphone buttons are being pressed to get the floor; red lights springing up like neon tulips. Staff from the big European NGOs are wading in on the barefaced cheek of putting people’s names to a pre-prepared statement. My eyes are wide in surprise at the audacity and naivety of the guy. The complaints go on for some minutes, he’s getting nervous, still he doesn’t seem to understand. Then he relents:

“Okay then we will say that the conclusions will come from the panellists only.”

In an instant, I press my micro-phone button and start speaking over him, the room is full of my core constituents, I can’t have this:

“I’m sorry, but I won’t have my organisation’s name put to something that we have not seen, read, or contributed to.”

I look around at the audience:

“I want to make this clear to everyone, we cannot agree to this document.”

He looks flummoxed, the other panellists nod in conformity, and his colleague takes over. She suggests that we will circulate their paper to the participants and people can add comments, ideas, and corrections. There is general agreement, but I never see the document, and all anyone will ever remember is the effrontery given.

Vignette 16: Programme Snippets (Reflection: written late-2017, recalling project work from 2004 to 2016)

I've realised that while I have great moments in the work I do – the flourishing in the moment stuff – it is the sensation of doing meaningful work over a period that also stack up for me. These snippets are mini-vignettes about the development and running a large programme I designed and directed. It had its ups and downs, but somehow it all came together. It reminds me that even the negative moments have a place in this. So, not as many writers have assumed we should always have positive moments, but the learning and development and the authenticity of work that somehow has its place. And also, how we react to it in the long-term, the making sense and the ordering of my work career.

Six months before starting: I'm in a bar in Belgrade, its late. I'm with two colleagues, we're drinking red wine, it's the second bottle already. I'm furious and raw after a frustrating planning meeting.

"For God's sake, I can't understand what these guys want. They don't put in any effort and then they go and pull the carpet from under our feet."

I take a sip.

"And what do they have to offer instead, actually nothing? What gets to me is the number of times I have supported them and then they do this."

My colleague:

"Everything will be sorted out. I know how you feel, it's like having teenage kids that aren't thankful. They'll come around."

I clearly don't look convinced.

"Look they have no choice, none of them can make this like you, and they know it."

He refills our glasses.

Three months after starting: I am sat opposite Karl our donor representative. We are having a post-lunch coffee by the side of the water in Kotor, Montenegro. The dry, yellow mountains

stretch up from the fjord to a perfect blue sky. It's a beautiful day, but I don't enjoy it, I'm not comfortable. This is the first time I meet Karl properly, and he has some peculiar ideas. So, I spend time slowly explaining the programme; there's four-million involved, it's important. He asks questions politely. I wonder if he is following it. Then he pipes in:

"I see it now, how it all hangs together. It's really very clever and comprehensive, but complicated. Will you be able to deliver?"

I grin:

"We'll see. We can only try."

He smiles back.

Six months after starting: I'm in a meeting with my colleagues from the Grants Team. We're going through the programme planning. We're working out a problem we've all felt, how to get some meaning for us and see the effect of what we do? It took some days of discussion, but now it's slowly working out. Everyone is engaged. Towards the end of the meeting I turn to them:

"Look I know we don't get the chance to do such a large programme very often and maybe we never will again, but let's make this the best programme we've ever done. One we'll all be proud of."

They nod, it seems to land.

24 months after starting: We are at the programme's half-way point, so the donor sends a small delegation. We have a lot to get across. I'm worried, our director has been unusually critical (*"This programme always has problems"*) and Karl, the monitor, continues to question odd details. It's a vital meeting, we work out our positions, each of us has practiced our role, we've set the agenda.

Everything is going well in the meeting, we are nearly at the end, then a crunch question from Karl. He wants us to put a condition on the grants that will simply kill us. I make a soft stand, I notice my staff, arms folded, lips tight, watching attentively. I explain step-by-step and describe the situation for the NGOs. Jens, the boss, looks to his other colleagues. Frida from the embassy makes a sign. He speaks:

"No, I think Robert is right, we don't need that, it'll just complicate matters. Let's keep what we have."

I see my staff relax, the meeting has to end soon, as our visitors need to take their taxi to the airport. Jens tells me he's very satisfied and, as he's leaving, mentions it to our director in his quick handshake with her. She smiles appreciatively at me.

36 months after starting: I'm leaving, but I have to set things right with my staff. I've been sitting down with each of them, and in groups: planning, discussing, setting the priorities. I write a long and involved description for the senior managers. It runs to multiple pages; a combination of status, plans, and opinion. I meet the deputy-director. We run through it. At the end, he thanks me and shakes my hand:

"I'm really impressed by this, it's the most detailed hand-over I've seen."

I look him in the eye, still holding his hand:

"Thanks, well you realise that I've worked for years on this. I want it to succeed. Also, for my staff. It's the least I can do."

He nods, yet I don't think he believes me... Shame.

8 years after leaving: I'm out of that organisation for years now. My colleagues had to finish the last year of the programme without me, but in passing I've heard it's gone well. I have dinner with a former colleague who took over much of the programme leadership. She's in town for a meeting.

I knew that the donor had come back with a second round of funds, but she tells me that now they are extending the work again to three more countries. I have an odd feeling of satisfaction that, so many years on, my planning and design is still delivering what it was meant to do. Yet, it is tempered by the feeling that I wish I'd been more of a part of it.

Vignette 17: Transitioning (Reflection: written late-2015, recalling mid-1995)

It's summer 1995, one of those good ones where the sun shines enough and the temperature stays up so that you can be sure to wear short-sleeves for some weeks. The pavements smell baked.

Despite this summertime feel it's a time of change for me, of transition from one reality to another, but from a seemingly dark one to an even darker unknown. I had that sensation of being in direct sunlight but feeling as though the light was being filtered by something that distorted its colours, like looking at an old colour film. Not a physical filter, but something inner; a shadowing.

This time marks the point when I came to leave London, that vibrant and dynamic, but people-chewing place, and moved to Budapest (and in the words of my father *"got a proper job"*). It was the time where my workplace finally succumbed to the inevitable and closed down. It was the end of that faltering failing, with the associated struggle for intermittent funding, the need to do a second job to keep going, the end of our story of growing from two to five and then atrophying back to two again; the demise of an NGO.

My boss at the time is still a friend, I learned from him, and, I think, he from me, but it was over now and time for us to move on separately. I keenly recall the moment we decided to call it a day. How we spoke calmly to one another about the situation, how it was going, how we were feeling about it. Then we quietly agreed that it was time to call it quits. We looked at one another and then instinctively shook hands, almost a cinematic moment, it was done.

Of course, I was thinking what I would do next before this happened; I was looking for jobs elsewhere, but nothing looked right. I didn't even know what I could do. I was fully expecting to up sticks and move back home, *up North* and unemployed.

This slow demise at work also mirrored somehow my personal life in London. While I love the city and fondly remember much about the life I had there and the friends I made, overall it really didn't fly for me. The relationships I had, too often torrid, fleeting, damaging, infrequently supportive; unfulfilling or unrequited liaisons. Another reason to go.

That summer of '95 I lived with a former colleague and friend, Victoria, who had left the NGO movement some years before to retrain as a teacher (now was that a possible way ahead for me?) Perversely perhaps, I recall this as my favourite time in London, living with Victoria. She was (still is actually) a lovely person with grace and style, but then also healing after a long-relationship with someone who

was meant to be the one ending in disappointment. She was righting herself too, and our common, and unspoken, situation, brought us together.

I loved her too, although perhaps as one who loves a fellow sufferer of the same malady. Feeling that our non-described roles and responsibilities towards one another was much like those of the part-sparring, part-supportive flatmates found in the better sitcoms. We had times, never planned, where we stayed up and talked; or argued over who had to empty the cat's tray (not my cat, loathed the thing) and who had to clean the bathroom; derided one another's music choices; and she chided me when I *caroused* a bit too much. A contemporary odd couple.

I rated the latest squeeze she brought home, and commiserated when they didn't work out, or when one wasn't interested (prick, idiot, tosser). Like a brotherly cheerleader, confiding and supporting. And giving the thumbs up when she started to date Will; who she would later marry and settle down with. And she smiled comfortingly towards me with my fails, and escapes, while trying to get back into the dating ring.

In this balmy summer and barmy situation, I got one last fax into the office from a contact in Hungary. Alex, who would become my best boss, mentor, and dearest friend. He had a job for me. I recall, when going to Budapest for the interview, that change of light, a warmer sun, and how I spent the weekend with Alex and his girlfriend. The city was also baking, more hot pavements, more exotic. We went out, partied a bit, and spent pennies; a new world in the East. The interview was easy. I was keen, yet relaxed, and got the job.

Suddenly I was in a daze. I was actually leaving London, but not how I had foreseen. From despair to a new light, it was brilliant, it was daunting, it was a relief. I arrived back in the UK, taking the Piccadilly Line's one-hour journey into the city from Heathrow, reflection time with a suit bag on my shoulder. Soon this familiar tube, with its quirks, jolts and security alerts, would be behind me.

I didn't go straight home, but to a party with some friends. It was a blur, I was the celebrity, moving on, with so much to tell, but so little time to process it all. A massive pang of nostalgia overcame me, almost a melancholy. Like the tube, these people will now be consigned to a place called past... It felt unreal.

It was time to go home and I shared a mini-cab back to south east London with Jayne a colleague. We got to her flat first, and, as she slid out beside me, she asked: "*would you like to come in for a coffee?*" I declined with a smile and as we drove off the driver turned and observed "*hey mate she was keen.*" I

laughed, *"yeah, but I know her, no thanks."* Then as I sat back in the taxi I thought: *'what the hell!? Why on earth would she hit on me now? I'm leaving in two weeks and suddenly she's interested...'* Adding to my disequilibrium.

I got home, and as I struggled up the narrow stairs, the cat came out and mewed at me, and I'm thinking *'I won't bloody miss you.'* Victoria was still up, marking books, and looked up from under the fringe of her red hair, a quizzical eyebrow raised. I told her I got the job, I was leaving. She was happy for me, I could see that - knowing my back-story, but as we talked I could sense her own doubts growing. Of course, now she had to find a new flat mate. And despite, the burgeoning relationship with Will (he worked outside the city), she needed to go back to the capital's merry-go-round of lodger politics.

The next morning, I couldn't get out of bed. I felt totally exhausted and weak, actually sick. I had *hit the buffers* at long-last. The relief, instead of being a happy release of tension, suddenly allowed the years of drain to come out. The psychological turned into the physiological.

I called Charles, a fellow colleague who had suffered depression caused by years of leukaemia treatment. He listened as I told him how I felt unable to do anything, not even able to listen to the radio. He said *"do nothing then, only when you are ready; stay in bed, inside; go for a walk or some lunch if you can but take your time."* I took his advice, went back upstairs, I felt nauseous. My limbs ached.

The second day I still felt weak, poorly, I hadn't seen Victoria as the evening before she was out and I was in bed when she came home. I called my boss and told him I'd be in the next week. I used the train and tube strike as an excuse. He said *"fine"*; a good man. I flopped in the flat, comfy in all my baggy football gear: sweat top, long shorts, thick socks. In the late afternoon I dressed and went down to the river and had a beer while watching the tide go out.

Friday morning, Victoria had already left for the school, picked-up by a colleague, a hurried - slightly worried - bye as she grabbed her bag and files and ran down the stairs. Then the phone rang, who rings now? It was my mother. Her voice was strained, trying to keep emotion under control. She asked me: *"could I get to Guy's Hospital at London Bridge?"* My twenty-month old niece had been rushed from Southampton up to London with my brother and his wife. She had a serious blood infection and it looked life-threatening, they needed me to be there while my parents drove down from Manchester. *"Could I get there?"*

“Yes, of course!” I said, already planning, thinking: *‘I need to shave, what shirt to wear, what’s clean, where to get a bus with the trains stopped?’* Jerked round and up and out of my down, the transition was suddenly made, if not physically, at least in spirit. I left the flat running.

Annex 3.1. – Elements of subjective well-being/flourishing models

Expanded from: Hone 2013, Huppert & So 2013, Ryff & Keyes 1995, Van Dierendonck *et. al.* 2008, Bowling *et. al.* 2010, and Van den Broek *et. al.* 2010).

Jahoda (1958:23) Six key elements of positive functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attitudes of an individual toward own self ▪ Self-actualization ▪ Integration ▪ Autonomy ▪ Perception of reality ▪ Environmental mastery
Ryff (1989) six dimensions of psychological well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonomy ▪ Environmental mastery ▪ Personal growth ▪ Positive relationships ▪ Purpose in life ▪ Self-acceptance.
Ryan & Deci (2001), based on Self-Determination Theory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonomy ▪ Competence ▪ Relatedness
Keyes (2005) Categorical Diagnosis of Mental Health (i.e., Flourishing) diagnostic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hedonia:

<p>criteria and symptom description</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1. Regularly cheerful, in good spirits, happy, calm and peaceful, satisfied, and full of life (positive affect past 30 days) ○ 2. Feels happy or satisfied with life overall or domains of life (avowed happiness or avowed life satisfaction) ▪ Positive functioning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3. Holds positive attitudes toward oneself and past life and concedes and accepts varied aspects of self (self-acceptance) ○ 4. Has positive attitude toward others while acknowledging and accepting people's differences and complexity (social acceptance) ○ 5. Shows insight into own potential, sense of development, and open to new and challenging experiences (personal growth) ○ 6. Believes that people, social groups, and society have potential and can evolve or grow positively (social actualization) ○ 7. Holds goals and beliefs that affirm sense of direction in life and feels that life has a purpose and meaning (purpose in life) ○ 8. Feels that one's life is useful to society and the output of his or her own activities are valued by or valuable to others (social contribution)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 9. Exhibits capability to manage complex environment, and can choose or manage and mould environments to suit needs (environmental mastery) ○ 10. Interested in society or social life; feels society and culture are intelligible, somewhat logical, predictable, and meaningful (social coherence) ○ 11. Exhibits self-direction that is often guided by his or her own socially accepted and conventional internal standards and resists unsavoury social pressures (autonomy) ○ 12. Has warm, satisfying, trusting personal relationships and is capable of empathy and intimacy (positive relations with others) ○ 13. Has a sense of belonging to a community and derives comfort and support from community (social integration)
Keyes (2009) (MHC-SF) ¹³⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emotional Well-Being (<i>Hedonic</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Happy, interested, satisfied with life (30 days) ▪ Social Well-Being (<i>Eudaimonic</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Contribution ○ Social Integration ○ Social Actualization (i.e., Social Growth) ○ Social Acceptance ○ Social Coherence (i.e., Social Interest)

¹³⁷ Mental Health Continuum Short Form

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psychological Well-Being (Eudaimonic) (Ryff, 1989): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-Acceptance ○ Environmental Mastery ○ Positive Relations with Others ○ Personal Growth ○ Autonomy ○ Purpose in Life
<p>Diener <i>et al</i> (2009)</p> <p>Flourishing Scale and the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaning and purpose (Ryff; Seligman) ▪ Supportive and rewarding relationships (Ryff; Deci and Ryan) ▪ Engaged and interested (Csikszentmihalyi; Ryff; Seligman) ▪ Contribute to the well-being of others (Maslow; Ryff; Deci and Ryan) ▪ Competency (Ryff; Deci and Ryan) ▪ Self-acceptance (Maslow; Ryff) ▪ Optimism (Seligman) ▪ Being respected (Maslow; Ryff)
<p>Huppert & So (2009, 2011)</p> <p>Operational definition of flourishing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive emotions ○ Engagement, interest ○ Meaning, purpose ▪ Additional Features:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emotional stability ○ Self esteem ○ Optimism ○ Resilience ○ Vitality ○ Self-determination ○ Positive relationships
<p>Van den Broeck et al (2010)</p> <p>Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale</p> <p>* removed from final version</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need for autonomy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I feel free to express my ideas and opinions in this job* ○ I feel like I can be myself at my job ○ At work, I often feel like I have to follow other people's commands (R) ○ If I could choose, I would do things at work differently (R) ○ The tasks I have to do at work are in line with what I really want to do ○ I feel free to do my job the way I think it could best be done ○ In my job, I feel forced to do things I do not want to do (R) ▪ Need for competence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I don't really feel competent in my job*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I really master my tasks at my job ○ I feel competent at my job ○ I doubt whether I am able to execute my job properly ○ I am good at the things I do in my job ○ I have the feeling that I can even accomplish the most difficult tasks at work <p>▪ Need for relatedness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I don't really feel connected with other people at my job (R) ○ At work, I feel part of a group ○ I don't really mix with other people at my job (R) ○ At work, I can talk with people about things that really matter to me ○ I often feel alone when I am with my colleagues (R) ○ At work, people involve me in social activities* ○ At work, there are people who really understand me* ○ Some people I work with are close friends of mine ○ At work, no one cares about me (R)* ○ There is nobody I can share my thoughts with if I would want to do so (R)*
Seligman (2011) (PERMA)	<p>▪ Positive emotions– feeling good</p> <p>▪ Engagement– being absorbed in activities (connects to <i>flow</i>)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationships– authentically connection to others ▪ Meaning– purposeful life ▪ Accomplishment– feeling of accomplishment and success
Michelson <i>et al</i> (2012) NEF Centre for Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feelings and functioning aspects of positive well-being – flourishing (SWEMWBS)¹³⁸ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Optimism</i> ○ <i>Meaning (useful)</i> ○ <i>Good feelings (relaxed)</i> ○ <i>Resilience</i> ○ <i>Competence</i> ○ <i>Positive Relationships</i> ○ <i>Autonomy</i> ▪ Evaluative on how people feel (ONS)¹³⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Life Satisfaction</i> ○ <i>Happiness, Contentment</i> ○ <i>Fears/Anxiety</i> ○ <i>Meaning & Purpose</i> ▪ Social Trust/Social Well-being
UK National Accounts of Well-being (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emotional well-being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Positive feelings</i>

¹³⁸ Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale.

¹³⁹ Office of National Statistics

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Absence of negative feelings</i> ▪ Satisfying life ▪ Vitality ▪ Resilience and self-esteem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Self-esteem</i> ○ <i>Optimism</i> ○ <i>Resilience</i> ▪ Positive functioning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Autonomy</i> ○ <i>Competence</i> ○ <i>Engagement</i>
Jeffrey <i>et al</i> (2014). Well-being at Work, Key Findings, some methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and vitality (physical well-being) ○ Work-life balance (optimal hours) ▪ Organisational system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job design (Fair pay; Job security; Environmental clarity; Achievable jobs) ○ Management system (Staff/Management Feedback/control; Manager behaviour/Management quality) ○ Work environment (Physically safe; Physical resources and materials necessary)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social value (Social benefits of organisation) ▪ Functioning at work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of strengths and feeling a sense of progress (Job specifications match the skills; Support and training (maintain skills); Opportunities to develop skills; Career progression pathways; Recognition and praise use is maintained) ○ Sense of control (Trusting relationships) enhance employee control); Employees to have a say in running wider organisation) ○ Work relationships (Time and opportunities to enhance co-worker relationships; Encourage staff to work together on projects, discuss ideas, or share skills, and to take part in social activities together) ▪ Experience of work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive and negative feelings (Emphasis on the positive aspects of an organisation (achievements); Optimistic and positive tone/interactions within the organisation (appreciative); Optimise work variety)
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Annex 3.2. – JUPITER practice lessons

The Process:

1. **Time and distance:** A perhaps obvious observation is that it is hard to sustain such a process where it is too long between steps. This, the language and the distance, means it is hard to build up a real rapport with this stop-start situation.
 - I.1. – Discuss the timing with the client; ensure that a pace is kept so that the process remains ‘live.’
 - I.2. – Select an in-house change champion, but not the managers of the project or the director, to keep the OV process moving (and its inherent enriching aspects).
2. **Organisational Pre-Assessment:** In the past the NGOs applied for this kind of support they were committed to do it. Here the OPA’s conclusion was correct, but a ‘no-go’ decision or go with ‘extreme caution’ was not followed. The pressure of the donor project essentially forced our hand. I also did not follow up enough on ensuring that the leadership of JUPITER kept to their commitments to ensure political support and involve the staff enough.
 - I.3. – More consideration of how – or whether - to carry out OD, with its essentially democratic edge, in organisations with heavy ‘Theory-X’ assumptions. How better to ensure the ownership of the OD process here and enhance the stringency of the OPA? Perhaps the OPA needs a more involved discussion of managerial motivations and purposes. Asking them a series of questions based on management assumptions (perhaps McGregor’s Theory X and Y can serve as a basis); building attitudinal ‘tests’ into it. Perhaps asking them to prioritise the issues identified, if external ones are the highest, stop there.
 - I.4. – Incorporate into the OPA an ‘estimation’ of how enriching the organisation is. Something that investigates/measures staff: involvement, job self-control and self-actualisation; with ‘red flags.’ Spend time to speak with individuals not only on what they are doing, but how they are allowed to do it and/or rework the staff survey used here.

- I.5. - Via the OPA seek to broaden awareness/agency and association of the staff in the OV process something in the OPA related to the purpose alignment (from shared vision), get people drawing/describing their 'perfect organisation'.
 - I.6. - When should I step out and face the professional and financial implications? Can I be stronger in myself to withdraw from an unready organisation (due diligence) or push for hard assurances? What is the balance between flourishing and non-flourishing (others and mine) and is there a 'cut-off' where there is more harm to than potential for flourishing?
3. **OSA:** The self-assessment process did identify many of the core organisational problems at JUPITER. However, some 'technical' parts are in need of revision or reduction, while importantly more thought into enrolment and ownership through the process is required. In addition, the old focus of the OSA on assessing Processes, Policies and Products could now be amended with an assessment of Practices, Place and Purpose, but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater, the 'soft' stuff should work alongside the more readily understood 'hard' stuff.
- I.7. - OSA methodology amendments:
 - Combine the three scoring columns into one (requires changing statements to reflect efficiency, effectiveness and financial viability).
 - Define core fields that assess potential for enriching/human flourishing (have a separate O/HF score). Could purpose, place and practice be introduced?
 - Administratively number or code the factors better.
 - I.8. – OSA methodology process:
 - Consider a slimmed or 'quick' version?
 - Begin by asking participants to consider what would they like the organisation to be like, and how they would like to develop themselves.
 - Strongly insist on the correct participation (board, management and staff); halt the process if this is not there. Maybe make a 'contract' or agreement with the organisation itself on certain aspects – clarify the psychological contract.

4. **Methodology:** For this inquiry this enquiry process I made some observations on how useful it has been to engage with my inquiry questions in a 'live' setting. In the case of JUPITER, it has been very challenging (I have had serious doubts on occasion as to whether I am doing the right thing and being quixotic in my expectations), but that has perhaps supported the research method by being so challenging and having to consider so many angles.
- I.9. – As a research methodology-*cum*-practice, I now see more clearly how the musing, walking and painting supports my inquiry. I was surprised by how much data I could gather, and more strikingly I was amazed how the paintings have helped me to process my feelings and to convert them into some understanding and even ways to go ahead. It has been exhausting though to express them in this written form, in particular the walking element which does not lend itself to being articulated.
 - I.10. – I have been well challenged to try to bring in aspects of EO/HF into my direct practice with my client. It has helped me to firm up what the *PPP* motif means to me and how it might serve as a basis for further interventions. I should continue to engage with this, but perhaps more explicitly and with others more.

Engagement and Ownership:

5. **Working with leaders:** During the third mission I became very concerned about how I could better connect with and help Daniel? I didn't want to see him as the 'enemy' and felt I was letting him down by not being better able to find a way to work this through with him. He tends to say one thing and act in another way, how to reveal this to him? I really feel that while he remains controlling of every organisational aspect - not delegating, stalling changes and not communicating - and becomes more accusatory towards the staff, as the external pressure mounts, he is missing an opportunity for himself (the change he fears is already being forced on him). But what to do in such an atmosphere where my more open approach may be seen to undermine a leader or management, and pursuing it can be even dangerous to the staff.
- I.11. – Spend more time and effort getting to know the leaders/management. Work with them to reveal their assumptions about management of people and their role (assess this and compare with mine [there is a good note in McGregor on this]), and what kind of organisation do they envisage it becoming. Be more explicit that dialogue and self-actualisation of staff underlies the approach to the OVT?

- I.12. - In the long-run is it worthwhile for them, me - and also the donor if there is one - to pursue a change/development agenda when there appears within the leadership to be no desire for change? Is it my role to try and persuade or convince them?
6. **Engagement:** Following the OPA I sensed the low engagement of Daniel and during the OSA the staff. Yes, they did the different activities and said the right things, but when it came down to it there were not enough dynamic people involved and with very limited engagement.
- I.13. – Think about ways to enrol and engage the staff better. While the OSA is based around a discussion and them ‘owning’ the results, if they are not interested beforehand it’s a grind. David Ballard covers the need to develop *agency*, *awareness* and *association* in a change process (2005, p.142), it might be worth investigating approaches or other aspects of enrolment in an action research process? Also, potentially develop the idea of a champion or a change group; Garratt mentions the idea of volunteers for this (1990, p.69).

Enriching to the fore:

7. **Whose purpose is being served?** On a transactional level I am contracted to the organisation, the management you could say, but over time my focus has shifted from the organisation - making it work, fulfilling its mission - to the staff and their development and needs. So, I question whether that is professionally ethical. So, where my Practice and Purpose goes beyond – or past - the organisation to the individuals (putting my Place there) what does this mean for my responsibility towards the client and also contractually?
- I.14. – With my switch in emphasis from organisations to persons, should I consider being more overt or explicit about the enriching organisation/human flourishing agenda I hold? For me shift from organisational mission to personal mission of the staff, is it enough?
 - I.15. – Protection of the people I engage with through my work is important. It would be illogical to cause harm to people when trying to develop an enriching organisational environment. However, I know that the type of development work - the primary helping agenda (Schein, 2006, p.188) - that was proposed to JUPITER, even outside the EO/HF aspects, would require *greater* staff empowerment and participatory decision-making to succeed. Even so, how could I put some checks on myself whether I am doing more damage and harm than good to the staff by pushing an ‘enriching/flourishing agenda’? By looking to

pull back the curtain, remove the shrouds and blindfolds? Shouldn't I just withdraw from this?

- I.16. – I have been concerned that perhaps I am looking for something that is my interest, my purpose, and not what others desire. Isn't there a danger, that just because I am interested in this idea of organisations being places to support human flourishing, that I am 'forcing' others into these questions and inquiries? Paraphrasing Stephen Kemmis (2006, P.96): '[I] feared that [my] advocacy ... had become a 'solution' looking for problems – that we had an 'answer' to questions that people were not necessarily asking themselves.'

8. **On flourishing:** I see an enriching organisation as a *human centred* organisation, but this focus on, and idea of, human flourishing is quite difficult to explain in organisational terms (what is in it for the organisation?) and towards people themselves. There are some particular aspects of flourishing that I now need to explore together within the research pillar on human flourishing.

- I.17. – Devise a clear way to explain what this EO/HF emphasis is about and what it is for organisationally (the introduction in my presentation to JUPITER's staff was quite effective). I have in mind the idea of making a presentation of different chess sets. Yet each set has to be played with different rules. There is the standard one, following standard rules; one with only queens and the king, but which may not lose any pieces; and one where if a piece is lost then it can come back as a better piece if the player can explain why they sacrificed that piece and they learn something. Something to think about.
- I.18. – On the surface many of the staff at JUPITER appeared too dependent on, even cowed by, management or unaware of their role in their own development, but even here, with the few exercises we did they began to show flashes of wanting to develop themselves and to take more self-control, creating a 'mini-flourishing space'. As Naomi revealed: "*they are happy with what you are doing, in the kitchen lots of talk and feedback. [but] They understand the limits.*" That gives me hope and the trial with the staff survey left me wanting to ask more questions of everyone and to see how to develop this approach further - removing the shrouded organisational existences.
- I.19. – I now understand Purpose, Place and Practice differently from when I began, I clearly understand that my own flourishing cannot be sustained if one of them is not sustained in my work or they are too out of balance with one another (blind-folding). It complements the

'mobius' image I painted of them sustaining my own involvement and engagement has been difficult. I have found it hard, because I think for my own flourishing I also need to see where the feedback is coming from. With JUPITER it is in drips, and so I have felt that my *PPP* is not always being 'maintained.'

Annex 3.3. – Worked Peer discussion summary

What is flourishing to you?

When I asked each of the eight peers what the word flourishing might mean for them they have replied mainly from a personal aspect, and although expressed differently there were certain commonalities.

The notable commonalities as I read them were:

- ✓ doing something worthwhile for them and others,
- ✓ being strongly engaged with that (the worthwhile thing) and through it with others,
- ✓ getting confirmation that what you are doing is positive (feedback, approbation), and
- ✓ a sense of learning or developing.

Let's hear from Liz:

"What makes me happy now, most flourishing, when I had a very specific project or objectives ... and have a great vision of what I am doing. That is suitably matched to my skills, can do it well, but need to do more learning and stretch myself to do it brilliantly. Some time pressure and a little stress; that perfect amount. ... I have learnt something, I have delivered something, I have achieved something, and somebody has benefited - get that feedback." (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

Simona, Andreas and Adriana have echoed this view:

"For me it's very straight forward, I flourish when I like what I do, when I have the trust of the people around me, respect, a bit of freedom, ... and I can do things. Where I respect and work well with my boss, professionally work very well. I can do both strategic and practical things ... and then I really feel I am adding value and contributing. I also tick when I learn ... when doing these things, pushing myself ... developing. and when I am paid fairly. When I feel I receive fair compensation that delivers and sometimes a little more for something exceptional, financially or not." (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

"I suppose it's what I would call fulfilment, and that would be a mixture of whether I am making a difference in some way... I can't say that much of the work I actually do makes me happy in

itself. The actual activities, the greater purpose of it that is fulfilling. And a part of that the sense that I am developing as an individual, that is certainly part of it. So, it's a mixture of mission, greater purpose and personal development." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

"I am thinking of growth... I think ... my particular case to do with flourishing-languishing is being in the right place with your life, ... Were times at [redacted] we all flourished as young professionals. Didn't have much experience. I think we had a great professional opportunity to flourish and do things. Sometimes I was not doing things so well, made mistakes, but learnt a lot. The freedom to make mistakes and learn from them." (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015)

The act of creating and being energized by the work is common. It seems to point to a nexus of where our skills are being stretched, we value this activity, and there is an authenticity to it and how it connects us to others. Both Mark and Laura, while also reflecting on meaning and the need to work with and for others, pointed to their work being the platform for them to be able to do the things they wanted to do. They use words like choice and opportunity, which appeared to me to denote a level of autonomy and self-direction:

"I never really thought about the word flourishing. Not really a word I describe something or I'd focus on. Couple of things come to mind and I resonate with, flowering, coming out of a seed, the vision and image I have. The other I have is flow. ...When I am in the flow of work it has less to do with the core of my job, the core of my job is administration, [it is] the opportunity to do more things that are creative. ...sit down have meaningful discussion and develop something creative. ... Find like-minded people, you can do something together." (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

"...top of the list, sense of freedom, autonomy and sense of choice. If I have to do something I am compelled to do I see that as debilitating to my sense of flourishing. Autonomy is it the same as the other factors? ... The word choice is a boundary of what you accept. ... I have configured my working world to have it containing mostly things I love to do. I have quite a high need for novelty, and low boredom threshold. What I have is to believe what I am doing is doing something positive and is generative. Has a positive impact. ... When I think of human flourishing I think of being held in a set of human relationships that are nutritious." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

For myself I have found such a lot of resonance in their words, in particular that sense of building something valuable with others, my comment to Laura:

"The things [I was] most proud of were things I felt were right, worked with others, and it came off. Now three programmes I set up, even though I was pushed out [of the organisation], they are still running and flagships. You know yourself; whatever you do the well-being effect is enhanced if you do it with others."

James also reflected on this and he mentioned how much he "...enjoy[ed] that role a lot, being able to enable people to do things, seeing people flourish, [build] meaning for them and learning new things." (James). With Nicholas, though his reflection took a more negative turn (he was intrigued by the term languishing I introduced him to), he said:

"I cannot say I am over excited in the job here. Sometimes I am counting the days of the week, on the other hand it pays. Sometimes I am thinking is that really enough?" (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

I noted my own resonance here with one position I had where the time seemed to drag and the walk home was the best part of the day. His reasons resonated too:

"I think the only thing that flourishes is my bank account; and even that could be better. I don't think that I flourish in the [redacted] at all. I am very much under-utilised, I think I could [be] much more.

Of course, with more resources. ...in terms of more and better staff... I am not involved in important decision-making, which impacts in my area of work. I don't like the working atmosphere, after my toxic boss left [it is] better.

Don't see good career opportunities, maybe [I'm] at the end of my career. The feeling here - to make a good career - is to have to have the right connections (to ED, DD), not open and transparent. I'm not dying here, [but] I find when I look back the job at the [redacted] was more interesting exciting and rewarding than here." (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

Nicholas's final words brought us to several other important areas that came-up, and covered across the different dialogues, that of what I have come to characterize as the *Realisation Points*. These are the times in people's personal narratives that appear to denote times, experiences or occasions that are a

part of our personal development and have contributed to that person's position towards their work; their understanding of their career if you like. And certainly, they are constructed into an understanding of who we are.

Realising flourishing

In defining our times of flourishing, and our stance of what it comprises when it is happening, these seem important. Indeed, some of the personal reflections I have done over the last few years were ways of identifying my own *Realisation Points*. Let's return to Nicholas when he spoke of his most flourishing work time:

"In the [redacted] I felt empowered. I had to consult, yet we/I had a freedom to do what we thought we should do. I think we felt trusted, maybe too cool for us, we could have misused it. No issue with travelling. Almost any idea was welcome ... and we could implement it. I found one thing I had the freedom to build my team. In the [redacted] in five years first time to hire someone. People were put in my team. In the [redacted] I could do that. Found the most excellent people in the world in my team. We had good working conditions, good office. We socialized, the payment was good at the time. Right ingredients, except for the last few years.

I was also much more brave, things I'd never do now. So, travels, speaking up to the boss, or going into meetings about topics I had no idea about at all. I was also different at that time; I was younger, more dynamic and more brave. Even though I had one-year contracts, did not concern me, now less than now, no family and kids. I didn't feel threatened there." (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

Importantly he raises an age or *generational* aspect of flourishing and perhaps our perceptions change as we develop. This developmental/generational/growth aspect seems important when considering what it means for practices in an enriching workplace. Liz's comments frame this well:

"If I could have recognized much earlier what makes me flourish, that could have made a positive influence on my life; most probably. It's something about age and what you've gone through in life that gets you to a point, what is important to me now rather than then." (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

Adriana has also touched on realising flourishing times, but perhaps not naming it as such:

“Did it in different moments, [like] leading the fellowship programme [and the] acknowledgment of what you do is good and useful – quality. Help a lot of people to learn. I don’t think I became aware of flourishing, but professional satisfaction. In UNDP these moments [too], there the projects were very down to earth and practical within small communities. It was small scale, but very impactful. Part of it [was] when you see what you did has a positive impact on people’s lives, in small things: a kindergarten had heating or a Roma child a sandwich and shower before school, so gets an education. Where you feel that, it is positive feedback.” (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015)

Mark told an intriguing story of how he found what perhaps is his underlying professional purpose. When he completed his MBA, he tried to decide where he should put his efforts (he has been working primarily with development organisations). Originally, he thought to look to work with big corporates on CSR issues - a strangely resonant story with mine when I finished my MSc in sustainability. He thought no, and considered starting his own business, part NGO work and part building public private partnerships. He talked with a colleague and, while opining that there were no wrong answers, she helped him to realise that the options “...all end at the same point - social change.” The key advice she gave was:

“Figure out the type of people you want to work with. Worked [your] whole career with NGOs, Nestlé might not be the best place to go. Go where you will be inspired and get the best chance to find satisfying work.” (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

This seems to have been an important realisation for Mark and, as we will hear later, has had a profound influence on his career. Simona talked at length about how she has changed over time, coupled to her leadership level, and what it was that ‘drove’ her:

“I remember early stages, all about learning and proving myself, different times, factoring [in] the opening as a country¹⁴⁰ itself, finally free, let’s go and discover the world. ... Then about proving myself, learning and acquiring opportunities to express myself, grow and learn, make a little bit of money. Then about proving, going up the ladder and make money, then it was about mix of these and also expanding, ... but show I can do [it] in different environments, more countries more complexity and that. Now I am after proving at a new level, establish myself at a

¹⁴⁰ Simona is from Romania and was twenty when the Communist regime and system collapsed.

new level and bring people with me, enjoy developing others more-and-more. I like to follow the new trends. ... About keeping my edge, because I know it's about increasing my worth." (S.

Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

The peers did differ on the importance of the generational aspects of flourishing and how that perhaps meshes with this personal development story. James, Andreas and Mark all mentioned that they thought it was more dependent on individual development than age groups. Yet Simona felt strongly that the multi-generational aspects should be given importance by an employer (she is head of organisational development):

"...the wellbeing concepts are now becoming more important for the new generations when they look for a job. And the attractiveness of the employer's proposition is important. ... Problem [is] if not able to recruit talent; so, they look at engagement, wellbeing, inclusion and diversity. Many companies look at this now with new glasses. ... Companies migrate to frameworks that cover three or four common elements. These are around the physical wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, social and financial wellbeing. Within these companies [offer] more or less. The big battle is will this become a differentiation; how much more-is-more, how much less-is-less. ...I have the latest global workforce study that shows that most companies are reviewing their wellbeing policies as they are not fitting employee needs anymore." (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

Whatever, the personal attitude-organisation match does seem to be an important consideration for organisations when working with, and identifying, their employees. To me I think there is a realisation that all people move – develop - in different ways, at differing paces and perhaps to different ultimate stages. Perhaps, as wellbeing/happiness studies would indicate, as more youthful people concentrate more on pleasure related aspects of happiness than purpose-driven ones (Dolan, 2014, p.34), then organisations would need to be aware in the way they hire, manage, develop and motivate employees.

Identifying the components

To try and build up a more detailed picture of what it is that contributes to a sense of flourishing at work - some components of it. I have used various wellbeing measures and drawn out what appear to be the main aspects from the current literature. These nine are grouped under three clusters related to:

Purpose, Place and Practice. I have then tried to see whether those discussions we had have connected with these, both to see what the peers have felt was important and as a way to continue the discussion on these individually.

1. Purpose: Meaningful work, Living values, Work-life balance

I was surprised – maybe I should not have been – to see that fewer of the words we exchanged on what is behind our flourishing actually reflected around our own vision of our purpose in life. Certainly, we all considered that we want to do something meaningful, but fewer of us actually said what that purpose was. How we flourish had changed for us over time, as we experienced more, as we matured, but what we find was **Our Purpose** seems less easy to define from other enriching aspects of life. Of course, this is an *existential* question, so how would it be easy to define? Perhaps defining our purpose is the *work* of our life, and is grounded for some of us in aspects of our lives outside of work and career itself.

1.a – Need for meaningful work

When I spoke with Mark I told him a story about the point where I realized what my working career was about:

“The point you saw ‘this is what I am about?’ I remember it myself, when that happened. I gave a training programme fifteen, sixteen years ago, maybe more, ... a lecture on the role of NGOs in civil society, [until then I] never thought why I was doing what I was doing. That helped me see what I was doing, why I was doing it, it was a complete [revelation]. From that moment that was how I was looking at my career, gave me a frame.”

Later I mentioned another story about how after I had completed my masters I wanted to work with corporates, but trying out to do so further refined my understanding of my purpose:

“...working with them, I realised that those people did not fundamentally understand the area at all. I could be the kind of poacher turned game keeper, looking to go into bigger companies, CSR type person. Yet after applying for a position, and even though I didn’t get the job, only getting to the second round, I realised I really didn’t want that job. This is not me. It’s work with foundations and civil society in that area is what I care about, not aggressively like an activist. I think it was about finding that thing I really enjoy.”

In my discussion with Laura (November 12, 2014) some other aspects of what was meaningful to me came to the fore. One was a sense of success in the projects I was involved in, a sense of being right, and the positive comments from the people you have touched and helped. In a way both are confirmations of meaning, one is broad while the other is intimate, as we said:

Me: "Feel the feedback time is very slow. Some of the work they [still] do at [redacted], stuff they are doing now, we set up. We get feedback. ... Also, people that were my team ... they still come back to you and say happy birthday boss. Those are the things where I get the feedback. Sense of me being ... a part of something."

Laura: "Making a difference. Some are more internally and some are more externally referenced. Feel [that] feedback internally or need the external."

Thinking back on this, and the other conversations, I now consider that, as we *construct* what is meaningful to us over time, then the developmental journey of identifying and refining what is meaningful to us is actually a huge part of the sensation of flourishing itself. In other words, we flourish as we go along, so long as on that journey we feel it is leading us towards understanding of and/or forming our central meaning; a kind of reinforcement. Thus, the way - the how - that the journey takes is very important and, conversely, where we feel we are stymied in that journey, to discover or deepen our purposes and meaning; we are then becoming diminished and may languish.

To me this reflection is critical in explaining that flourishing is contingent on experience and within the moment. It reverberates with Aristotle's comment on King Priam's end at the sack of Troy, it relates to the Conrad quote to on the effort in ordering our lives¹⁴¹; how we *feel* that process of ordering. It perhaps also explains why, as Laura related, retirement can become a nightmare for many where the process of order can become artificial, or even in difficult work situations many can sustain a sense of purpose within the act of the struggle - even if not fully flourishing – as it contributes in some way to our ordering of our life.

¹⁴¹ 'For there is required, as we said, not only complete virtue but also a complete life, since many changes occur in life, and all manner of chances, and the most prosperous may fall into great misfortunes in old age, as is told of Priam in the Trojan Cycle; and one who has experienced such chances and has ended wretchedly no one calls happy' Aristotle (2009, p.15-16).

'No man succeeds in everything he undertakes. In that sense we are all failures. The great point is not to fail in ordering and sustaining the effort of our life.' Conrad (2011, p.81).

Mark, as mentioned earlier, painted a compelling story of how his career developed. I think it illustrates these points further:

Mark's Story – Finding Meaning

"Thinking back on my career, two things I would point to.

When I started my career I probably thought my whole life would be in the development, social, NGO side: Peace Corps, Save the Children and a few others. I always thought I'd work for an NGO probably in Africa. Then at some point go up the ladder, and perhaps be an executive or president in the organisation, my young aspirations. But then working in NGOs I got tired of espousing sustainability and not being sustainable myself, or the organisation. Realising the social NGO model wasn't really what I wanted to do. [Essentially it] came back to questions on human development and business and economic development. So, I went and got an MBA when I was 39-40, and loved it. I wish I'd got an MBA early in my career; it would have been great to get that toolkit at the beginning. I've become more practical over time and less content focused.

The second point was the realisation two years ago that my career will never go to the executive level. We made decisions that have made the career path [unconventional]. The path has been serendipitous, about social change... So, I worked in refugee camps, in development, in a children's museum in Chicago, worked as a consultant and at a small start-up in Senegal, and now with the Global Fund. If charted out [you'd say] what is this guy thinking. But the red thread has been social change. Change on a big level, crush a disease, or in Chicago where they need local education.

I'm happy along that continuum. I'm happy about the serendipitousness of the choices."

On another note, however, Nicholas relates a different story where, even in a mission/purpose-driven organisation, meaning can be subsumed by a diminishing work milieu:

Nicholas's Story –Losing Meaning

Me: "When I have come to [REDACTED], people are great, nice and interesting, but seem totally bored with their work. The purpose of what they do. In the work I do I try to look at the meaning of

what people do. You even said you are an unimportant team. People seem unengaged with what they are doing. What's going on?"

Nicholas: *"I can tell you a little bit of how it is here. I wouldn't say we are bored, though it happens. I would say we are implementing projects that are underfunded, ...funding for the activities we should implement is limited and it is delayed. Somehow, they forgot the funding of my whole team. So, for four months we did not do anything. ... An extreme example. Mainly it is the underfunded projects and very little chance to raise funds. Not really encouraged by [REDACTED], they don't want one hundred project managers approaching donors."*

Nicholas: *"There are lots of administrative issues. We do make an effort to improve that, again [REDACTED] has a hierarchical structure. So, you find many people that just give up, kind of lethargic, you know, as you said, they are good experts with potential, they for sure tried and gave attention to the organisation, but at one moment they gave up. They do their job, but kind of lost their excitement, as many things they cannot achieve. And then what is in my area of work, sometimes we are working on an illusion, are many CSOs interested to work on [REDACTED] ... does anyone care what [REDACTED] does?"*

Nicholas: *"[As an example, we] send new policies for approval, since then it is lying there. Before I got real pressure. We really worked for days, now four months lying in the office, I asked for a meeting, and e-mails. Got zero response, not very motivating. It is really symptomatic. Never hear anything back."*

Me: *"Jesus, I feel you are all kind of biding your time. Time is the key in a life span, not something you can buy back; not wasting it seems key. How does this feel like?"*

Nicholas: *"There are worse alternatives I am not crying, it is boring at times. [REDACTED] pressures you to stay. Five-years pension, then ten years you get the health insurance scheme. Many people here are unhappy with the job but they don't go or speak up or risk a conflict, because the conditions of the job are so good you wouldn't risk that. Important to mention that. Has the effect to shut up people."*

Nicholas was generous to be so candid about his workplace. I feel that his *Dilbert-like* description is useful in showing that despite being in an organisation that is focused on *meaningful ends*, and which one would assume would bring purpose to its employee's lives, it is actually having the opposite effect. Here is an organisation that does not live up to its values, disrespects workers as whole people, weakens their relatedness, gives no meaningful feedback or support, centralises decision-making, controls resources, and undermines the chances for people to do anything that will allow them to grow. In the end, other than the pay and pension, it is almost all the bad stuff all at the same time.

What is interesting is that both Mark and Nicholas work in international organisations. There are some similarities in their descriptions of life in their organisations which were not covered here, but the sense of meaningfulness seems quite different for them. To me it clearly shows that to flourish one has to have more than simply having a *calling* in life, and through the other aspects below I seek to look at.

1.b - Living your values

One of the areas I have often seen civil society or mission/purpose-driven organisations fall down on is that they don't actually live up to their espoused values (as in Nicholas's Story). I have seen organisations that give funds or run projects to help people treating their own staff in an unethical manner. It strikes me how can employees under a *diminishing regime* be expected to act in a way that helps others? Surely there must be some fall-out from such a state of affairs. Owing to this I have considered in my work an organisational self-assessment question that looks at this, how does the organisation ensure that its values are living ones? During the conversations there were references to this aspect, as Simona related in the business world it is point of focus:

"Companies are trying to do purpose-driven life, [to] attract people, and they look to get a common purpose, joint values etc. But there is a match needed who you are and what the company wants to be. ... We do engagement surveys, we do it multi-generational, where people are, where they are not. Sometimes we just say our offer is this and they may not fit." (Simona)

Liz, who has worked in retail and banking, also mentioned key values, but noted that in her best-case example that *"...they were, ... developed by the people in the business, identified as the things we needed to succeed at by the people in the business..."* It seems to me that there is some form of practice here, to see a values discussion as organisationally important. Authentic living values, particularly coming from the leadership, were also an aspect of my discussion with Adriana. She reflected on one workplace where this evidently wasn't so; and eloquently pointed to its source:

“It was a big disappointment, [we] could have flourished, [but the] company [and directors] had no vision. It’s really important; you need to know what you are there for, what you are doing. And money is never enough... . Leadership is the lever, there was no leadership. This was a couple of defeated, dejected and disconnected characters! Who I think consider themselves finished professionally, at least [redacted] he is a smart guy, it was sad, he found himself doing a boring European project, [and was feeling] it’s your company, makes it profitable, money comes in and yet you are trapped in this fake success.” (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015)

So, while I agree with Simona on the need to be pragmatic here and discover the fit between the person and the organisation, Liz’s and Adriana’s comments point out that organisational values are still a construct and how we go about determining these values in an authentic way and how they connect with the staff (and ourselves) is important in terms of human flourishing. Organisations are not things, they are groups of people and the people, particularly the leadership, are determining how they appear. I also have a concern that by only looking for people who fit the current thinking then an organisation might lose opportunities for new ideas and might stagnate. When I spoke with Andreas he talked a lot about how they had developed a set of behaviours which encapsulate the values and way of working in his organisation:

Andreas’s Story - Behaviours

At some point we discussed the performance system at WWF-DCP and the amount of personal development in the process. Andreas revealed that they have a set of behaviours that they have worked out over a period and that *“How the person works towards the agreed set of behaviours, and some values relate to that, and another part is ... the personal development.”* He tells the tale of how these behaviours - really expressions of their organisational values – came about:

Andreas: *“We had a lot of organization change over the last couple of years. We lost sight of our organisational culture, we had one in the past we were a very different organisation in the past. Relatively smaller, simpler, more like a club or high-octane driven NGO, and with an increase in size and complexity we lost some of that, also some key people left and some came. [We] found a need to renew that culture.”*

"And this, ...was an evolution, came in 2005, not a very good team spirit, so had a series of team meetings, took effort, by third or fourth year they were not complaining that they had these meetings, they looked forward, and it was an issue if they couldn't go., that helped getting people to work together and report, but in between there it [the organisation] got bigger and we lost that, so we had to restart and last September we looked at organisational culture, did a kind of evaluation, rated areas of the organisation and looked at the status and where we would like to be in terms of organisational culture."

"[There] was a significant gap and we had a discussion that led to how to bridge that gap. We identified a number of values we felt were important. Should have high standards, respect to, for, each other, they are high and abstract, sort of meaningless. To make [them] meaningful we had a process to identify the behaviours to make them meaningful. ... Things that make them important in daily work."

Me: "Values and how people fit in the organisation, how is that then used?"

Andreas: "We had a discussion what to do with it, and the important thing was it was a bottom-up process in developing them. List was basically what I would put together, so was in line with what I and other senior managers wanted. It was important and incredibly powerful, we can call one another on these things. You wanted this, not us! We all agreed. Becomes less disciplining and more about pointing out where we are not in line with the values."

Me: "Is it formal or done on a daily basis, are they encouraged to discuss?"

Andreas: "We have long discussions, now embedded in the appraisal process, so values are now integrated into staff appraisal formula. Makes it extremely long, but makes sense to be there. We make note of values in application materials for recruitment. Developed a series of visuals around the office, seems a bit silly to me, but others like it, an internal communications campaign. Important to me that we live it, ... and be reminded of the values and call [one another] on it. I and other managers need to provide an example ... I try to reference them [the behaviours] and use as a guide for management."

Me: "Is it bedding in, or too early?"

Andreas: *“Too early, but the direction of development has been a positive direction. People remarked positively. Regarding the early action we’ll see if there is a difference in progress in evaluation.”*

1.c – Having a work-life balance/choice

Most of the peers work in the field of civil society development, so it was not perhaps surprising that in our conversations many referred to a mission or a purpose bigger than themselves; the need for meaning discussed above. Andreas noted that while the time of life might influence, in part, how people decide on how central work is to their lives, he felt that the choice has more to do with personality and their mixes of different meanings:

“Most I work with they are mission driven to a certain extent, [they] could almost certainly earn more money somewhere else ... so that plays a role, but there are other things for other colleagues. One colleague having the flexibility in work and ability to take-off and have long vacations, to have freedom, we try to provide it as its important for her. For others the flexibility of daily work; not punching a time card, but that it’s done. Doesn’t matter to us when it is done, early morning, late at night. Certain continuity. Salaries are an issue for us in our organisation. For some it is relatively more important, not so much for me... Issue is more about fairness.” (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

Even in the corporate world Simona pointed to the equations people make when weighing up career choices, with money often further from the top of the priorities than we would perhaps think:

“...it is an equation [people] do: pressure, social worth, what [we] know to do, and how well you do it, and the ethics. It’s a personal choice, how people chose, themselves. Pay is not the most important, [they] think: environment, company, type of job, people I will work with, and then pay. But if pay is bad, regardless of the first four, they won’t go there.” (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

These discussions gave some indication that the third of the Purpose facets I looked to incorporate in the organisational assessment, that of work-life balance, was important. James had the view that our education systems should look at presenting work-life and fulfilment as a part of their curricula; sort of raising the issue of wellbeing early on. It was Liz however, who focused a lot on the issue of work-life

balance, both for herself and for her colleagues. She spoke at length about the programme she did at her former organisation and how it helped them to do their job well in a manageable way, let's hear from her:

"They [store managers] told me they were happier, the things made them happier, felt less pressurized - were more control of their environment. ... The work I did with them time and again allowed them to be more structured and deliberative, not just fire-fighting. Allowed them to ... have a work-life balance. In retail the hours are unsociable, twelve-hour days was what you did. You would have to stay really long, twenty-hours was expected. [Then] people started to say they can do the job and do it well. We wanted to do it differently, and I played a part in helping that. And they were happier, but then there was a cascade-effect in the store, so the people in that store benefitted. If the store manager felt the benefits [then] kind of automatically they wanted it to go to their people." (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

She talked about a more negative example where she worked in a company that had strong *"American attitudes to work"* and where the compliance rules, while they were clear and not really negative, were never properly implemented by the managers. Eventually when the company was sold to another bank the prevailing work culture and expectations started to impact on her work and work-life balance, she revealed:

"Almost the whole environment consumed everything else. Work-life balance [issues] came in, I never felt I was doing enough, always home late. [In the end it] probably reduced my work [effectiveness]." (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

From the discussions there appears to be again another valid approach aspect for any organisation that wants a staff enriching focus. That it should look into the issues of work-life balance or employee conditions in an authentic way. And in some way, it is a subset of the living values of the organisation.

2. Place: Relatedness, Supervisor behaviour, Solidarity

"Go to work, work with friends and be supportive of others. Engage with others and the community, why else do it?" (J. Friel, personal communication, June 12, 2015)

James's quote above echoes much of the happiness and wellbeing literature - particularly that which looks at social wellbeing - in that people seem to flourish more when what they do is done with the *right* people. This section explores the role of *Place* in flourishing. Originally, I had equated place with the organisation and the role one had in it, and how that gives meaning and a context, but now I believe that this is only one such facet of place and it is in the relations with others, both the close relations with colleagues and the more distant ones, with organisational stakeholders and the wider society, that are important to a *sense of place*.

2.a – Finding relatedness

In the classic work of Ryan and Deci (2000) much is made of *relatedness* to others as an intrinsic part of their Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Indeed, much of the discussion between Laura and me revolved around the need for positive connections between people as an element of an enriching environment. As Laura revealed:

"When I think of human flourishing I think of being held in a set of human relationships that are nutritious. So, when in [a previous organisation] I learnt early craft, but that had too much that wasn't about people showing up and showing up well. [In my new partnership] ...I am able to be very best as I am able to get the best from others, and so give my best. What emerges in terms of outputs of conversations is the degree of health. It needs people to speak from the heart, and the head, and the body. And there are ways of people being with one another that are incredibly generative and help flourishing. ... [There is] a sense of well-being when I am in that group and acknowledge that I belong there." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

Others talked of their need for connection with others in their work, Adriana revealed:

"I think [much] is about being able to communicate and actually to get to know your co-workers, get to know the people; especially in a small company." (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015).

While Liz, a free-lancer, said:

"After two-years not working with others, except in trainings, now I love with [redacted] [her business partner] to bounce ideas off people. What I produce is better than if I had not done that. I need a person to tell you: what is rubbish, what works. Need someone work-wise to help,

but others also that personal connection.” (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

She talked further about being relived about not having to deal with the office politics (*“I hear people in companies dealing with another layer of complexity before getting down to the job”*) and that there might be a different balance of relatedness between more introvert and more extrovert people. Still those working in organisations, managers, also spoke of the satisfaction of team working and mentoring (James pointed to the need of pairing people with different strengths as an approach), as Mark put it:

“I always get more satisfaction, and seek out team experiences. In the work I like the team, to manage the team, and have conversations; how to build their competencies and get to the same level. Part of the job I enjoy very much.” (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

It is a feeling that I have had myself, and value, the ability to work together within a focussed group and with a social aspect: *“I had a staff, I had a bit of a buzz about being boss; stressful though”*, and being self-employed I keenly miss that everyday connection. However, when it doesn’t work out it can be quite painful, James spoke about the closing of the NGO he led for many years, *“I felt I let people down”*. He went further, talking about the need for a connection outside the organisation too:

“Maybe my style was too idealistic. What we were doing didn’t communicate to others, there was evidence of need, but it was not on the radar of others.” (J. Friel, personal communication, June 12, 2015)

The challenge, maybe a disorientation, seems to be located on when what we find meaningful is not reciprocated either close-up by colleagues or, in his case, by the wider society (donors). Liz spoke of one of her best work situations, where she flourished. Initially she spoke of the task in hand, but then her language shifted; she spoke more in terms of what it meant for others. I find her words both revealing and inspiring:

Liz’s Story – From the People, For the People

Liz: “It mattered to other people; I was making a difference, contributing to the company and business. I need to pick that apart a bit, but it provided some of that external validation measure. Yes, look the [engagement] index increased, [but] also personally I was making a difference to individual people. Getting external validation from them, and see, feel and hear the difference of the

contribution. Another, relevant as well, the team we all worked very well together, bit trite, but clear purpose and the clear roles we had and supported each other and we celebrated the good parts that we did as well. And we worked on what wasn't working and improved them."

Me: "What facilitated that? I had similar experiences. How would one replicate that?"

Liz: "Number of elements. Some of the things were very individual, some of which were organizationally deliberate. Had a director of culture, conscious organizational decision and have that role and bring in a person who would focus on the how rather than the what. ... That decision was at board level. Generally, I saw that filter down as I worked closely with the regional directors. We were the HR team, but worked it in the field with the operational people. I could see it generally working - away from the lip service - I saw they were being internalized."

Me: "How did they get to that point? Leadership everyone talks about that. Leadership changes the whole game in organisations for me."

Liz: "Came from Board, not sure they genuinely all believed in it. But for whatever reason they started it and then the people that took hold around it, I think with [organisation], could be wrong, practically all the people in it had been there a long time, or practically grew up in it. I am now on a Facebook group of ex-employees, people talk about that being a big part of their lives, ... the [organisation] family, and people all over the country still use the training materials we produced fifteen years ago. The competency manuals, I have seen eight different managers in the last three weeks, using it still now. ... Was that feeling of growing up in it and doing it together and really wanted to do it; for themselves and for the company."

Laura pointed to the need to actively build relatedness and support connections between people in organisations: *"What we need is a set of really robust conversations between people."* She touched on some potential practices:

"Some things have profound impact, listening is one thing. Rigorously use a check in process. How I feel, am I in the room? Do it more and more. Try winning a leader over to use that process; it brings more humanity on how we are with one another. Conversations, dialogues, are the route I'd go." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

From this exploration the issue of *good communication* as an engenderer of flourishing seems to me to become more apparent – sort of the *Dark Matter* of organisations; and organisational leaders should heed this. I think I have understood this from my own experiences. I particularly remember one boss who insisted all meetings last only twenty minutes, the resulting decay in connections, and loss of effectiveness, was palpable.

2.b - Supervisor behaviour

Leadership is perhaps the most talked about facet of organisations, whether people flourish or not at work, so then it is not surprising that the practices and experiences people mentioned regarding supervision were passionately felt. Simona put it succinctly:

“Latest studies show that the top thing that affects well-being and engagement is leadership. The way leaders either are able to ... show care, give reactions, empowerment, be flexible, or not, are the main core drivers toward wellbeing and productivity – can’t separate wellbeing and productivity.” (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

She believes that where leaders tend to go wrong is that they often act in *“an inappropriate way: either within the situation or the style. They get it wrong if the style and the situation and the recipient don’t match. It is a balancing act, a skill and an art at the same time, though some of it can be learnt.”*

Revealingly, and encouraging for their subordinates, it’s an area all of the supervising peers were conscious of; let’s hear from managers Nicholas, Andreas and Mark, in turn:

“Everyone is different ... a manager must try to have an approach which takes that into account. So, as we both know, I cannot treat everyone the same way. It does mean equal treatment and treat everybody well, but to achieve or get something from one person might mean a different approach or reward system to than from another person, and a third would do it automatically. What does it mean for wellbeing in organizations? Organisations need the ability to adapt to the different personalities etc. If you really believe wellbeing of your staff is a kind of key condition to get the best results.” (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

“The leadership sets the tone for the organisation. I have become more and more conscious of that and the need to cultivate that. Even symbolically; and remember birthdays. Go out of your way to congratulate people. Makes [positive] waves and is worth doing. ... We spend a lot of

time discussing people management issues. As we change structure and organisational culture, it is something I have had to change. Not always easy. By setting example and having discussion like this with people. Recently we do 360° evaluations for the management team. Helps us grow and shows example to the staff. We are open to self-reflection. ...I admit my own failures and mistakes, self-deprecating, but very different in Eastern Europe where the boss is always right; then when you admit mistakes it confuses people. I thought about it, but we need [to exhibit] an organisational culture like the one we are going towards. People might be confused initially, but it's a learning process for the staff. The best I can do is go along with what I find is natural and right as a leader." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

"My first boss was very much a principled person, focussed as a leader on Steven Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, planner, roles, goals, etc. I was twenty-six working in Mauritania for an NGO. ... He demonstrated conscious leadership and development of people around you. [We were there short-term] ...so part of the goal was to leave something behind, some capacity, ... Look at the team and their aspirations and support it." (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

Almost all conversations revolved, at some point, around performance management, appraisals and mentoring. This appears to be an expression of the feedback and development function of managers, and seems to be a critical *enriching-manager* role, and one that perhaps many are not able to fulfil. Most peers mentioned the need for a more developmental approach to management, as a key function that supervisors are accountable for, but several also focussed on the need to hire the right managers in the first place...

Robert's Story – Learning from Toxicity

In my conversation with Laura (November 12, 2014) she asked me some pointed, and appropriate, questions about why I was interested in flourishing and what experiences I had had that had pushed me in this direction. We spoke of leadership and she revealed her opinion on how a leadership's approaches impact on the whole organisation, what she called the *fractals*, and that where there is dysfunction and entropy coming from the leadership it is reflected as an underlying narrative across the organisation. I responded to her:

Me: *"There is a throwback to this toxic boss in particular. If you are in that situation with a narcissistic, sociopathic person, in a mission-led organisation, how do you deal with that? She [the director] tried to enrol me into her 'team', but she couldn't understand me either, that her capacity to be unfair and lie in your face was repellent to me. I couldn't deal with why this person was doing this for."*

I related to her the tale of one of our early management meetings, with a facilitator, and how the director pointed to a completely centralise organisational system and said *"that's the pattern of decision-making I see"*, and how I looked at a colleague opposite and he raised an eyebrow in quizzical alarm. I was intrigued why she wanted me in the senior management team.

Laura: *"You talk about her and this quite a lot. [Your wife] says it's [ADOC] two years of catharsis. I am curious what you are getting out of still revisiting that?"*

Me: *"I think because it is my sort of antithesis of what an organisation should be and what that generated. And ... it was oddly the making of me; perhaps perversely I did learn a lot in the five years, learning despite the suffering."*

Laura: *"Are you cross you stayed longer than you should have? I'm not hearing that."*

Me: *"I am cross that it didn't end on my terms. She realized that she would never win me over."*

Laura: *"Then you were too dangerous to have around. For you her management had no authentic quality, [when that happens] you just don't stay."*

Interestingly Simona had related a similar situation for her, when they brought in a new executive to a former work place. Within two weeks she knew she had to get out. To Laura I finished by saying:

Me: *"What bothers me deep down, it's not just the personal situation –though it's a big part of it – it's how everybody else was treated. A collective diminishing of people. That's just genuinely awful and unfair. Because of the work I do I have developed a sense of what I am about; you know social change or environmental protection, [and] that kind of fairness in civil society. It was perverse [to me] that such an organisation could be managed in such a way."*

Liz also reflected on her negative management experiences (we all have them):

“First thing is languishing doesn’t seem strong enough. No, I think it is a good description, but at some point, it was more than languishing. ...the bad bits I had were to do with a set of managers within my function, not to do with the company. ...a group of managers who kind of had their own agenda and ... I wasn’t in a job that made the most of my skills. I was doing it not to the best it could be done, didn’t feel I could ask for support, or get to do it better, or move in a different area. I was not listened to..., with her lack of experience of managing people at my level (was good at admin staff), she couldn’t manage her problems. I take some responsibility for it, I couldn’t push the discussion.” (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

Interestingly, Nicholas also reflected on a lack of guidance, support and communication from his leaders: *“...communication is a big problem, from top to down. Not always clear how they get to that decision.”* Adriana went further and mentioned how the atmosphere (culture if you wish) in one organisation she had worked in, and its inauthentic leadership, revealed the fractal of the pervading leadership stance and their role in generating a diminishing environment:

“...you felt yourself watched what you do and how you do it. No openness about what you are doing or how you do it. ... There was no dialogue. There was a denigration of people, talking behind backs and a lack of trust. So of course, I knew they were talking [in the same way] about me. At some point it comes to the surface, ... This sort of hypocrisy, let’s do it but not do it, it’s inauthentic.” (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015)

From my own experiences I have felt that the most difficult managers were actually quite frightened people. Frightened to let their staff develop and wanted to retain unreasonable control, even when the power that they gathered they could not wield effectively. In the end the autonomy and choice needed and the development aspects for flourishing under Self-Determination Theory become completely blocked. Even relatedness suffers as staff can become set against one another. It seems that having the right people (attitude and aptitude) as supervisors and leaders is crucial to enabling an enriching stance. Revealingly during our discussion, I felt that the peers talked most freely about their negative and positive manager experiences.

2.c – Ensuring solidarity

“Not easy to prove it [the positive effect of looking at wellbeing], and some companies do all the wellbeing initiatives and then treat people like shit, [it’s a complete] waste of investment.” (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

Fairness towards employees appears to be an important area in the wellbeing literature, though I have had a suspicion that as a factor of flourishing, when it relates to conditions, it has more influence as something that can diminish one's experience of work rather than as an enhancing effect (in the way that Frederic Herzberg talks of hygiene and motivators in his classic 1968 HBR paper). We have heard earlier from Simona on the "offer" that organisations have to decide upon, what she described as it being: *"important to understand how they [employees] understand well-being, what from the theory can be done and what cannot be done, theoretical aspiration and practical implementation"*, but others also talked of both certain important fairness aspects and the different needs of different persons, let's hear from some of them (my emphasis):

"It starts from simple things like to be more flexible on work time. Some work better other times, to reward people that work hard at peak times. For instance, the conferences work, they work twenty-four hours a day. And overtime, no reward or professional compensation, lost hours. People are thus not so keen to get this extra work." (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

"Salaries are an issue for us in our organisation. For some it is relatively more important, not so much for me... Issue is more about fairness. [It needs] some kind of system and justification. We have it, not everyone is happy with it, but we can explain it; some system, some thinking and it is transparent. We can't avoid subjectivity to an extent, but we can explain that subjectivity." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

"It's not about going after money; it's internally feeling for your contribution is it fair or good." (S. Popovici, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

We heard from Nicholas's story earlier about the difficult culture in his workplace. We discussed this further and some elements appear to relate to solidarity/fairness issues:

"One reason [for the fear] is many people are on fixed-term contracts one- or two-years. ...Many people don't have a feeling of stability in their jobs. Some have permanent contracts and are fine, but people like me always have feeling somewhere in the back of your mind that you can lose your job. And that runs through the whole organisation. ...There are bosses who are really using that and who cultivate [fear] among their staff; that maybe next time they won't get the contract." (N. Lander, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

With Laura our conversation moved differently here. She had a perhaps *harder* interpretation of fairness angle, by turning it to a requirement for fairness to others, a wider solidarity, when people do not fit or undermine work in an organisation:

"[We are] not good at running these organisations to fulfil their potential, and not good at getting rid of those people that no longer fit. [We need] robust conversations on whether what you are good at is what is needed. We hold on to people that are no longer any good there and we feel we are doing them a favour." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

I spoke of a past and current situation where I had to let someone go who was not going to fit in the organisation and Laura expanded on her point:

"It's not necessarily the organisation's responsibility. The utopia is that people are sufficiently self-actualised to move into or morph in places where they can make their contribution. If they no longer need to be there, they need to recognise it, the time to move." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

It is an interesting counter-position taking off from where an enriching organisation, that hopes to help its employees to flourish, can begin to look like some sort of *nanny*, to one where the role of an organisation is to create a culture that *"...allows smart people to do the right stuff, get them on the bus and then allow them to fly."* (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014). She also focussed on the need then to get the right people in.

Indeed, Adriana used the same *bus* phrase (attributed to 'management guru Jim Collins' (Amabile & Kramer, 2011, p.10)) and noted that we cannot expect everyone to come along in any situation: *"...you will always have the one third rule, you have to accept it. Maybe that is [the same] with flourishing? Some people don't get on the bus."* (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015). Although, I am concerned with the *'...assumption that individual performance depends solely on something inherent in the employee'* and we might disregard other organisational aspects (Amabile & Kramer, 2011, p.10). In the end I think from this perspective that the aspect of solidarity goes beyond the issues of work conditions to cultural conditions and the structures that sustain them.

3. Practice: Subsidiarity, Self-direction, Growth and development

“It was that feeling of achievement, it’ll sound exaggerated, every day you were achieving something.” (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

Self-Determination Theory, as mentioned earlier, and the more popular works of Daniel Pink (2011), has a strong focus on the intrinsic motivation at work via high levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This section on practice relies quite heavily on these first two facets in its set-up, but also on others’ views towards subjective wellbeing and our actions, including Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of *flow* (2002).

3.a – Subsidiarity (Autonomy)

I had included the idea of subsidiarity¹⁴² in the organisational self-assessment tool I have been refining, as I believe that as an organising principle in organisations there are certain structural and cultural positions that if enacted will reinforce the ideal of autonomy (considered as an intrinsic motivator by some writers). In the discussions most talk that could be linked to organisational subsidiarity was oriented towards the role of leaders, so essentially how the *Peers* experiences of managers spoke of their autonomy and choices being reduced. Liz again:

“...this other boss, we don’t need to anonymise her, she would never recognize herself. To be non-P.C. she was probably psychotic, was a narcissist. [She] ... treated all of us appallingly, took it in turns to be awful and pick-on people. In that team the rest worked really well together and produced some good work and was proud of it. [But for her] it was never enough and never would be.” (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

She went on further:

“[I] did do good work, but got no recognition. Got nothing from the organization everything produced as the boss’s work, not mine. ... I was in the HR team and not involved with the business. I never saw the difference we made; [I] was removed from it.” (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

¹⁴² Subsidiarity is political organising principle that states that all matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralised competent authority. In organisations I consider this means that decisions should be devolved to the place where they make most sense, in essence it is a position that will enhance autonomy and choice of workers, and reduce the usual trend of continually sending decision up to higher authorities.

In my reading of Frederic Laloux's work *Reinventing Organisations* (2014) I have been taken by the idea that structures or processes are a counterpoint to cultures and their formation. I took up this discussion with some of the peers, in particular within this idea of autonomy and sustaining it. Andreas had some pertinent views in this area:

"Yeah one of the reasons is to soften some of the negative effects of structure. We need structure to have us work together to do things. Need supervisors, when we have questions or concerns. We also need accountability. So, need structure of that kind, but at the same time we need people to engage and work together. This is why we want to blur these lines, why we look at culture and put much work there." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

Laura also spoke of the changes she sees in organisations and the implications for decision-making:

"Make the crap work automated. Lose the middle-management, so accounting will be automated. Lose them and people can intelligently self-organize." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

This area of autonomy and structure was less well covered than others, which perhaps denotes it is either less important as an aspect of flourishing, or it is not readily identified, as its effect is *blamed* on the pervading leadership-governance influence. I am still convinced however, that there is a process-structure versus culture angle that is worth considering in enriching organisations. It needs further thought. Despite this Adriana brought in an interesting link between trust and autonomy at work and, I think, shows its importance:

Adriana's Story on Trust and Freedom/Autonomy

Adriana: *"I think trust is a big element of human flourishing, being and trusting. Otherwise you don't feel you have the freedom, stay guarded and worried, not flourishing in those conditions. Quite an important element."*

Me: *"How to develop [that], what makes you trust and be trustful?"*

Adriana: *"Interesting Question, the moment you see that you are given freedom to do things that's when you realize; trust your professional capacity. So, but how to give trust? I think the same way. I think it's through partnership..."*

She spoke about her early career when she was a student in communist Romania and the situation for people, even in apparently good careers and with good conditions, where the real freedom of choice was missing in their work (in fact in the whole of society).

Adriana *"I worked through my student years in an institute doing creative things. [We] Had money, best architects and you would have a project to systematize Romanian villages, in political terms it brought [them] into the modern 20th Century, but at the end it meant you were destroying a way of life, and put them to live in blocks of flats. In theory an ideal working place to flourish, in fact it was the opposite, there was no freedom to do what they [the planners] thought and felt was modern and good living conditions. They did not flourish because they were always restrained in certain parameters. Even people who were politically connected were promoted, and did well [through connections], they didn't flourish either, as they had no choice or freedom."*

In many ways Adriana points to the power to act and have enough freedom in work, what I characterise organisationally as subsidiarity (decision-making at the most appropriate level) or choice for the individual, being an actual expression of trust in the workplace.

3.b - Self-direction

The idea of self-direction also has a strong lean towards the idea of autonomy, but also other wellbeing theories that emphasise *environmental mastery* or *competence*. The ability to make choices and to organise oneself appears to be an important facet, yet as with the other *Practice* related enrichment approaches the peer discussions were sketchier on this.

Still as Laura noted, when we discussed the need for autonomy, it is important for her to organise her work to do the things she loves to do. In that sense she is self-directed to a high degree, for her: *"The word is choice, choice is important at the boundary of what you accept."* She expanded on this from different angles, particularly on how the structure of her work-life and its mix is important and spoke of needing a certain amount of stretch (Liz also mentioned this), but that she *"can only do certain periods where I can do overwhelm,"* which I took as if she were in a situation of near constant overwhelm this would be undermining her work and the ability to flourish through it. She also said that the opposite, of being underutilised, is as bad, and so perhaps there is an optimum position for everyone when it comes to self-direction, some need more and some less, or in different ways:

"I disconnect in a place of stress. ... Too little work? I can't do that either, I'm just crap. Flow is in the middle of the line. ... [Also, there is a] balance between certainty and uncertainty [of having enough work], and I need both. I need enough certainty of financial support. I need enough uncertainty to keep me open. ... When out of flow, things don't work and don't line-up it is a kind of surprise and I have to work it out." (L. Lewin, personal communication, November 12, 2014)

Interestingly, in a slightly tangential way, she spoke of the need to be able to move, and I suppose to have that physical choice: *"simple elements of human flourishing, one is to be able to move physically. If I am static for a week or eaten food that doesn't feel good [it's bad]. I take a forty-five minute walk every day that frees things up."* There is perhaps much in the company wellness initiatives being touted.

In *Liz's Story* I saw how her work helped to positively impact on the work of the store managers at her former workplace where they could get more control over their jobs. And for Mark how it is clear to him that *"my job gives me a platform to do what I want to do"*, and where a big part of that is being able to self-direct; and conversely when he had a supervisor that did not allow that then he would have to work *"...under the radar..., ...it meant I had to do things a little differently, or ask questions a little differently."* In some ways I felt that this need to be creative really speaks to the core of Mark's sense of flourishing at work.

For some, though, there is a realisation that their jobs mean that they cannot control enough of the factors impacting on them; especially external ones. James mentioned the funding environment and how it crippled their work and Andreas neatly spoke of the effect of things imposed or outside his orbit and highlighted limits to his self-direction:

"The flip side, [doing] work that is not fulfilling ... or not achieving something, could be external things, can't change; but internal you certainly can. But [mainly] when I am not empowered to do something, being kept, micro-managed ... also work culture fits or discourages those things. [Such as] overly political, nasty-culture, not focussed on achieving things, or development of staff, or is petty." (A. Beckmann, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

3.c - Growth and development

I think that many of the accounts at the beginning of this piece say a lot about this final element, so I won't repeat them again. There people speak very much about learning and growth and development. I think for myself the idea that I am learning and developing is a fundamental part of who I am. I know

from some of my jobs, where I have felt constrained, had to do work that was uninteresting - or just plain boring - I have felt seriously down and disengaged. The need to develop and be creative, to master something, is I feel a fundamental part of flourishing for many, perhaps almost, as Csikszentmihalyi would have us believe, an end in itself. I highlight this through the peer group's words:

"...I was good at, but also learning and getting better at it, that element of learning and – I hate the word – stretch kind of pushing me to get better." (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

"...but I really enjoy the parts of the job that allow me to use those MBA skills. ...support to be more creative, but more of a spotlight. [So, I] can find the opportunity to do what I want to do, the more interesting stuff. ... When do I languish? When I have to fill out an Excel spread sheet for the fifth time, for a different department, when they already have the data and can get it more easily." (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 26, 2015)

"I think for me ... it means I work in an environment where I learn, opportunity to meet with different situations and learn from people. You need a certain humility for that. You can't flourish if you are arrogant and think you know everything; opportunity for learning." (A. Crăciun, personal communication, August 2, 2015)

Adriana, apart from pointing to the accepted view that learning and development is an important part of flourishing, notes the need for humility to be able to flourish. I think that this aspect, of emotional intelligence, was apparent from speaking with all of the peers. They had a depth of understanding of their working lives and could draw from them and make sense of them. To illustrate these learning points let's follow Adriana further through her description of her work with her colleagues (Project Officers (POs)) and their clients in a large international foundation.

Adriana's Story Learning and Humility

"In my job now, I feel it all the time. ... I saw a certain pattern lately... I am always asked about different situations they support. There is always a dilemma, something doesn't work or this organisation doesn't develop properly, or communicate with them well. I mostly don't have an answer, and even when tempted to suggest I hold back, as I feel there is a great responsibility to give a solution. It needs proper consideration and dialogue with the organisation itself."

[When] I dialogue with the project officers and the organisation they [often] see it differently. [A] good learning that second-hand information is not always accurate. ... I become a way of communication - a conduit - to break the impasse; then I am a moderator of the communication and bring agreement between their perceptions and what they want to do next. The PO says one thing and the organisation has a different impression and sometimes they are worried to tell it [to the PO]; they don't with me as I have a different function.

[In the end] you have the immediate reaction of things being clarified, or simply by giving the opportunity of the discussion. The opportunity of the dialogue is interesting. Many times, the POs questions are very programmatic, they don't understand the context of the organisation compared to the way I do and that is revealing for them. I ask the organisations to tell something of their history... and a few times it brings [an] underlying understanding of what is going on. Then the PO 'gets' the organisation differently. ... So that for me is a success, the new understanding, of the work I do.

For me this dialogue and understanding is a continuous learning about how people function. You know ... I work a lot with my intuition, I sort of sometimes feel things. ... I base it on experience. ... I flourish because I think it is where you learn professionally. In most of the cases I deal with there is an element of success as well."

This aspect of learning, and the role of dialogue and discussion in that, is, I believe, a vital area and I think has much to say about job design and team design.

Nota Bene: Dealing with 'data'

The research approach described in Chapter 2., helped to gather a body of verbal and written 'data' that I needed to process somehow. The eight peer discussions alone (see Sub-section 2.2.1.2., second inquiry round) covered around fifteen hours of recordings and the abridged transcripts more than 16,000 words. While not data in a quantitative sense, it is still necessary to be open about how the qualitative data from the discussion transcripts and work diaries of the *Peer Inquiry Group* has been assessed and

utilised. Especially as transcription and analysis of qualitative work is difficult and perhaps imprecise. As Berkowitz notes:

'We have few agreed-on canons for qualitative data analysis, in the sense of shared ground rules for drawing conclusions and verifying their sturdiness'... 'This relative lack of standardization is at once a source of versatility and the focus of considerable misunderstanding.' (1997, p.36)

While appearing inherently subjective, by being conscious and open about the steps of the process taken, I see this as embracing a constructivist research stance. In dealing with the interview and diary data I kept in mind Berkowitz's five questions for qualitative coding¹⁴³; noting that:

'Apart from exploring the specific content of the respondents' views, it is also a good idea to take note of the relative frequency with which different issues are raised, as well as the intensity with which they are expressed.' (1997, p.37, my emphasis)

While these were important stipulations for any analysis, I was also mindful of those contrary points from my review; those outliers that are often put aside in purely statistical analysis. Let me also be clear that, in-line with the research ontology, I did not look to a positivistic, *objective coding* (Seidel, 1998, p.14), as I wasn't seeking to present a *'... "condensed representation of the facts described in the data" (Seidel and Kelle, 1995)'* (Seidel, 1998, p.14). Furthermore, the method of data collection did not support this.

Conversely, I was leaning towards the *heuristic coding* that Seidel describes: *'...treat codes as heuristic tools, or tools to facilitate discovery and further investigation of the data'* (1998, p.3). He relates further:

'In a heuristic approach, code words are primarily flags or signposts that point to things in the data. The role of code words is to help you collect the things you have noticed so you can subject them to further analysis. Heuristic codes help you reorganize the data and give you different

¹⁴³ '1). What patterns and common themes emerge in responses dealing with specific items? How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to illuminate the broader study question(s)? 2). Are there any deviations from these patterns? If yes, are there any factors that might explain these atypical responses? 3). What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How can these stories help to illuminate the broader study question(s)? 4). Do any of these patterns or findings suggest that additional data may need to be collected? Do any of the study questions need to be revised? 5). Do the patterns that emerge corroborate the findings of any corresponding qualitative analyses that have been conducted? If not, what might explain these discrepancies?' (Berkowitz, 1997, p.35)

views of the data. They facilitate the discovery of things, and they help you open up the data to further intensive analysis and inspection' (1998, p.14)

For the peer conversations the transcription process itself was the beginning of the analysis¹⁴⁴, especially as I did not want to make verbatim transcripts; only feeling it necessary to transcribe key passages or quotes in full and with additional guide notes on what was being said. While this process involved difficult choices, it was necessary to make decisions otherwise I would have been left with '*...a large volume of unassimilated and uncategorized data for the reader's consumption'* (Berkowitz, 1997, p.36). Yet, when reducing other peoples' words, I tried to ensure that I didn't '*... "flatten" or reduce the data [so] that they sound like close-ended survey responses...*' (Berkowitz, 1997, p.36) or overtly reify something.

So, when reviewing the peer conversations and diaries I followed a *loose coding* by considering the transcripts with an eye for those elements that appeared to approximate to the *Purpose, Place and Practice Motif*. Noting where comments appeared to relate to potential flourishing aspects and/or their associated organisational approaches. It meant considering how what was written, or said, fitted within the wider research picture; as The University of Texas at Austin comments with regard to determining findings from interviews (2011): '*Qualitative researchers need to be flexible and open to the unexpected. Drawing on repeating ideas and themes, summarize the findings in relation to your research question(s) and to previous research.*' Following this guidance has led to the identification of some recurring elements and larger themes, and which were brought together into the main inquiry themes.

¹⁴⁴ Perhaps even starting prior to that with the notes I was taking in conjunction with the recording.

Annex 4.1. – URANUS case study

‘The history of a battle, is not unlike the history of a ball. Some individuals may recollect all the little events of which the great result is the battle won or lost, but no individual can recollect the order in which, or the exact moment at which, they occurred, which makes all the difference as to their value or importance.’

The Duke of Wellington in a letter to John Croker, 8th August 1815

Introduction – URANUS case study

The point of this case study - a part of my inquiry methodology - is perhaps threefold:

- a) to consider what my work means to me and my flourishing,
- b) to understand where aspects of flourishing might be manifest in the organisational environment, and
- c) potentially lead to the development and trialling of practical *enriching* activities.

I try to point these out throughout, but, as with the quote of The Duke of Wellington above, I know my recollection of any case is not perfectly sound and the history of this battle is certainly flawed. Still, my approach to presenting the case study has been to attempt a form that mirrors the presentation of Patricia Shaw in her book *Changing Conversations* (2002). Her position on change has strongly informed mine and, as with the discussion on methodology-validity I presented in an earlier paper I think that the research methodology needs to match with the ontological position of the inquiry. Thus my approach of tracking the work with the client and noting my impressions alongside it seems appropriate.

First a bit of context: URANUS is a leading European civil society group, they devise and organise Europe-wide campaigns of the wider network of which they are a part. They have around thirty staff, mostly focussed on specific issues that they campaign upon. Much of the work of the staff revolves around these campaigns, from the fundraising required to run them, to analysing European Union policy, developing alternative positions, devising media and public awareness campaigns, and co-ordinating

within the wider network. As they work at the European level, the campaigns are highly technical and require in depth knowledge of the European policy fora. Timeliness and foresight are key requirements, and, as for most civil groups, a lack of resources a daily reality.

URANUS has clearly been successful in developing over a number of years. With much of the organisational development has focussed on internal processes, finance and administrative strengthening. Still for some time a position of Campaigns Director (CD) has been mooted as a potential part of this development and has been supported by the Executive Committee of the organisation. However, when the position was discussed during a staff retreat in September 2014, it was evident from the feedback given by the staff that there were profound doubts about whether the position will be either effective or financially sustainable. In addition, many of the staff expressed a strong opinion that there are other organisational needs that might be prioritised over this position.

Based on this response URANUS's Senior Managers (SM) have responded by looking to make a fuller assessment of the capacity of the organisation. In October 2014 they prepared a Terms of Reference (ToR) for an Organisational Capacity Assessment. These ToR set out a focus on assessing organisational capacity/needs towards:

- strategic co-ordination and leadership, and
- programme planning, implementation and management.

Additionally, the ToR highlighted the aim to identify *'bottlenecks, gaps in planning and in strategic-decision-making; as well as other weaknesses in the organisational structures and/or processes that affect URANUS's impact.'* As such the overall desire was, via the changes resulting from those issues to be identified in the organisational assessment, to enhance URANUS's impact. The output of the assessment was limited to a written report.

Getting Involved

I was approached by Melissa, Director at URANUS, in Mid-October 2014. She told me that the management audit report I had done about them for a donor in 2011 had been very helpful for them and they wanted to find out what I thought about their problem. In the 2011 audit report I had

recommended that URANUS looked to broaden its senior management (there are only two senior managers); so, in some ways I was faced with my own words. However, I instantly felt that trying to re-introduce the CD position would end up with either confrontation or stalemate.

Owing to the people involved – having some idea of them – and their work (plus the instantly recognisable name) I was very interested in to be involved. Of my sensations, I wrote at the time:

‘I was so pleasantly surprised to be approached by them [URANUS], it feels great that even after three years the positive impression I’ve made was still there. It pays off to work conscientiously and diligently, even if the [work] days are not enough. Feel good.

I so want to do this work, they are great and committed people, they do brilliant work (I think they are the best group I have worked with). Helping them would be something really worthwhile and is important. It adds an extra pressure, don’t mess them up!!! They are completely overwhelmed with work, how to do this? It’s a bit daunting.

I want to go back to the learning from JUPITER and do this even better. There were several tips and ideas in there and they need to be brought into the practice and into the [organisational self-assessment] tool. This is a great opportunity to rework it, especially the scoring tables, and to add something of the flourishing enriching stuff. To see where it might go. But I have to be careful not to drive my agenda and I need to be sensitive to their needs first. I also want to check out the background assumptions of the managers. The problem at JUPITER was the late realisation that Daniel didn’t want to open things up, he was more Theory-X than Theory-Y. Needs a step-by-step sensing and a lot of flexibility.’ (Atkinson, R., Musings, October 2014)

Even at this early stage of becoming involved I could relate with things that fed into the *Purpose, Place and Practice (PPP)* ‘model’ I’ve been playing with as a way to explore flourishing. Clearly, to me, there are *Purpose* related aspects, especially in the desire to support their mission, at least in some form, and success. *Place* seems to be resonating in the people and the organisation that this would be for, coming from my respect for their work. I think it also came from the feeling that they would consider me as good for them – worthy enough - to do this work. It also has that sense of engagement with and a feeling of being part of some bigger community (a real deficit for a self-employed consultant).

There was also a genuine feeling of being able to focus on my *Practice*, to work on the type of activity that I hope to do more of, and potentially to work on the areas that I had seen in JUPITER that required

further thought and, importantly, new approaches. It was potentially a *learning-rich* environment, one that energised me more than perhaps anything I'd had to work on in a number of years. It also meant that I could see where my own stance towards organisations – that of an enriching focus - might be revealed towards others and gauge how they react.

What was also tangible were my nerves – the doubts - about the potential for it to not work out; perhaps echoes of JUPITER. But this tension also fed into the practice portion through the way that I wanted to take a measured and checking approach with the client, and to not be caught into doing what I felt was wrong. It gave me a sense of resolve and direction in discussing the various steps and outcomes.

I held a Skype discussion with Angela to find out more and ask for some further background information, we agreed that I come up with a proposal in a week's time and we scheduled for a week later a discussion with Melissa and Angela, the operations manager. I was very keen to take on the work and I proposed two main avenues for carrying out the capacity assessment they wanted¹⁴⁵: one based on the organisational self-assessment tool and the other via a learning history on how they run their campaigns. I also began to investigate the character of the work and, to ensure that we were working from similar positions, presented my perspective on the approach followed. In the proposal I wrote the following:

'So, any approach should take a step (or a few steps) back and address some of the... [staff] concerns (I noted comments like: "Very concerned with existing proposal content and process wise" and "There was not a proper analysis if we can have another person in a Network development, Comms or other team"). So, an enhanced analysis coupled to a phased approach, with appropriate reflection and check points at each phase, seems appropriate.' (Atkinson, R., proposal to URANUS, 31st October 2014).

During the discussion we agreed to this phased approach, with checking and close discussion along the way. I gained an assurance that this work truly had *open outcomes* and wasn't simply a Trojan horse to

¹⁴⁵ I foresaw three main steps each incorporating checking and reflection:

1. Organisational Pre-Assessment (scoping and readiness assessment);
2. Organisational Self-Assessment (self-analysis, objective setting and prioritisation)
 - a. Option A: using a *self-assessment* tool
 - b. Option B: using a *learning history* or mapping approach; and
3. Organisational Development (planning, implementation and reflection) [N.B. beyond the ToR].

bring the CD position back in via another route. Yet, while open to other capacity needs, Angela and Melissa wanted the focus to be on the main strategic and campaign capacities, as this was their prime concern and they had limited resources. I was fine with this, despite its meaning that a full organisational assessment was not likely, as this spoke to a comment made by one of the peer group, about my practice, that I also have to be more relaxed towards client demands.

A further discussion took place with Angela and Melissa on 20th November, where URANUS decided to contract me to carry out the first and second steps. Some days were made available for part one and the design and work for part two would be decided following this Organisational Pre-Assessment. I started to ready myself, and informally discussed options with Adriana, one of the peers and a co-author of the self-assessment tool.

Meeting the Goats

The first face-to-face meeting (Organisational Pre-Assessment: scoping and readiness assessment) was set in early December 2014. The core part of this pre-assessment was a series of semi-structured interviews; mostly in person, some over Skype. Conversations were recorded (permission was given), however, it was agreed that these were only for assisting with the note taking and that they, and the points people made, would remain unattributed and confidential between the interviewee and the consultant¹⁴⁶. Ordinarily I prefer to hold these discussions in the form of a seminar – and to include members of the governance body – but scheduling would not allow this. By way of preparation I also reviewed many of URANUS's background documents; they were useful in understanding some of the issues faced by the organisation and to *feel the vibe* of the organisational structures and processes.

Discussions centred on: how the different staff did their work; how successful they were; what they felt they needed to do to do their job better; and how to attain the campaign impact required. It was also an important place for reflection and to air concerns and hopes for the organisation; and to gather suggestions for the development of URANUS.

¹⁴⁶ N.B. Once the contract was finalised the recordings were deleted.

In the end the staff involved were very open and candid, and I suspected that many would not have been so open in a group setting. As a practice point there is some trade-offs to be made between individual work that facilitates greater chance for openness and group work that may enable joint sense-making and reflection.

It also underlined that the people felt largely overwhelmed by the work they had to do; with comments wide-ranging across all organisational aspects. The 'stresses' raised were, I felt, potentially damaging to the flourishing of the individuals, with both antecedent and consequences shown: overwork, connectedness or consultation, questions over pay, inequalities of influence, doubts towards meaningfulness (impact) etc. Some illustrative comments are included in the box below:

About campaign planning:

- *"We are de-motivated to do this, it is administrative," and*
- *"[the] strategic process a bit formulaic, we need more discussion opportunities together."*

On the work overload:

- *"We should focus on less issues, we are so very broad Robert. [There is a] strong case for working on less issues and having more impact on fewer things. If we were able to narrow down, we would feel more satisfaction on what we are doing and doing it really well."*
- Several people directly expressed that they were *"working too much and do too much,"* and they went on to say [we need] *"external help to cut down ambitions. Too many campaigns. Need help to do the cutting down."*
- Another related we have: *"too much work, too few people."* And linked their feeling of being *"drained"* and in *"low spirits"* to the sensation that while they win some campaign battles they are *"losing the war."*

While staff clearly identify with, and are committed to, the organisation and its aims there does appear to be some uneasiness over the impact of what URANUS is doing through its activities:

- One person said: “[we need to] *be more consistent that knowing that the things we are doing are reinforcing our core values. How does it all fit together?*”
- Another: “*regarding impact, [we have a] measurement weakness. We are not good at evaluating our work. We acknowledge the need to do it, but there is no time or space for it. We keep running to the next big issues. It is cultural, it’s not in our system to do that.*”
- And yet another opined: “*often success is about the activity and not about the impact. Success is about a meeting not about what it means; [its] celebrated more than the outcome.*”

Atkinson, R. (2014 - unpublished report).

However, perhaps the overriding impression (and the background to the title of this section) was that I gained a strong impression from the various managers that they were very much working within their own area and saw the problems as coming from outside their control; almost a ‘siloeing’ of opinion. At the time my eldest daughter had shown me this picture of goats set in a tree (she found it humorous), each goat on its own branch and chewing the leaves around it. I thought about how this seemed to fit pictorially how I was viewing the relations between URANUS’s managers and units.



I decided to paint this, a part of my inquiry practice, and I wondered would this become the image of the organisation?



The periphery notes read from left to right: *'safe or stuck; coloured-lenses, differences, same tree; fewer leaves higher up; separate branches, little-cross-over (comms/co-ord); nowhere to land.'* These notes reveal my concerns of: organisational disconnection; an inability to 'climb down'; more divergence the higher-up people climb, limiting joint opportunities; limits to communication and co-ordination; and sheer bloody stubbornness.

While some of these observations have a measure of resonance of what was going on I now realise, and following the assessment work with the staff working together, that this was only a part of the picture. Naturally they were concentrating on what others were doing and how it caused them problems. It is a salutary point to recall in the dialogic nature of conversations. Working with staff in isolation will give a certain skewed picture. And probably explains much of the problem with the classical audit/expert approach to change interventions.

Before Christmas I wrote up my Organisational Pre-Assessment (OPA report) and shared with Angela and Melissa. As well as the main findings and opinions presented, I asked that they ensure that if we continue with the other steps that they ensure that there will be sufficient time and resources made available. As I wrote in the executive summary:

'...owing to the, understandably, heavy workload on the staff and management, I am honestly concerned that any organisational development process – and to react to its findings - may be construed as an additional burden and may lead to expectations that cannot be met (or seen to be met). This reflects my main concern about the readiness of URANUS to undertake this process. So, the [Senior Managers] will need to be sure that they can assign enough internal capacity to support it and to address the organisational development issues arising from the assessment process.' (Atkinson, R. 2014 - unpublished report).

In the New Year we discussed this together over Skype and, while they committed to this, they felt that they could only focus on a limited number of components of the Self-Assessment (Strategic Thinking and Project/Programme Planning), and to one day. Initially I was disappointed as I felt that there were organisational issues across the board, also I could see that aspects that were impactful on human flourishing were spread across all parts of the self-assessment methodology. Despite this I understood their position and while not perfect (there I go looking for perfection and completeness again, part of my *need*) I agreed to develop the assessment tables for a more focussed one day session.

Lastly Melissa asked that I present the findings and the process to the staff during their monthly staff meeting. I readily agreed as I saw this as an opportunity to keep people aware and informed of what was being developed. I was also pleased that Angela and Melissa were taking seriously this need. However, already I was beginning to hear some echoes coming back from the organisation, when Melissa told me that Peter (the most senior of the Programme Co-ordinators - effectively the middle managers) had expressed the opinion that the whole capacity assessment idea was *“a waste of time and money.”* It left me feeling more aware of the potential dangers of the *goat tree mentality* in the organisation.

The URANUS staff meeting was held on the 20th January, in the afternoon. I prepared a short slide show (four slides) and beforehand read and re-read the OSA report several times over. I could feel myself becoming uneasy (*“why if people have asked for this are they now resistant?”*), and I could feel the sinking sensation experienced at JUPITER rising up again, that feeling of wanting to do this job, valuing it, and wanting to do it well, but having to deal with the complexity of it all. Then I managed to catch myself before the meeting, *“hell I can only offer what I can, if they are not ready for doing this then we shouldn’t do it.”*

The presentation was difficult owing to the unreliability of the technology. Questions started to come, some useful and to the point, others were searching and framed in a doubting tone, others wanted to assess outside the organisation, it was losing focus. I was trying to answer through the delay, but they were fielded mainly by Melissa. I sat there, knowing full well I was being projected on screen, trying to sit calmly in front of a room of people I could not see or read.

After an hour (felt like several) we asked for volunteers to take part in the new stage, the Organisational Self-Assessment (OSA), a few did so there and then, and then we closed the connection. I turned off Skype, sat back, and breathed out deeply *“for Christ’s sake, what do they want?”* I felt that we had been caught into the *goat tree*, a million different perceptions expressed in almost accusatory ways. I had a knot in my stomach, did I blow the chance to do this work; my fears and impatience were getting the better of me. Angela called me back:

Angela: *“that was difficult, sorry about the link.”*

Me: *“yes me too, I didn’t feel I could get over things too well, it was difficult to answer with the delay. How many people have volunteered I heard about four? Didn’t sound like we would get*

many more (we were looking for at least twelve, spread across administrative and programme units). Do you think it's viable?"

Angela: *"Oh it's normally like that, it's the URANUS way. After we got around eight already committed and several more are thinking about it, we'll be okay. Let's go ahead and we'll find some dates."*

Revising the Assessment Tool

I made a series of notes about the OSA process with JUPITER (Observations and Implications, Annex 3.2.). I revisited them (there were nineteen separate points under eight headings) and I started to work out how to implement or include them into URANUS's assessment (I see this as a practical inquiry cycle of action and reflection into my practice). There were several that, in terms of practice and flourishing, came to the fore:

Keeping the Pace/Sustaining involvement: It was hard to sustain the JUPITER process where it was too long between steps. I discussed the timing with the URANUS to ensure that a pace was kept and that the process remains 'alive'. I also proposed the selection of a Change Team to sustain the process.

Introduce Enriching Elements: The old focus of the OSA was on assessing *Processes, Policies* and *Products* only. I could now amend that with an assessment of *Practices, Place* and *Purpose*. I didn't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater; as this the new stuff should also work alongside the more readily understood and accepted elements.

OSA methodology amendments: There were three main areas I could implement:

- Combine the original three scoring columns into one (helps to save time and is less laborious).

- Define core fields that assess potential for enriching/human flourishing (have a separate EO/HF score). Perhaps Purpose, Place and Practice can be introduced and become more overt?
- Administratively number or code the factors better.

Using images: I was amazed during JUPITER how the paintings helped me to process my feelings and to convert them into some understanding and even ways to go ahead. I was challenged to try to share these with the client, for URANUS I resolved to do so.

While each of these changes is important the one that looked to involve enriching or flourishing aspects should perhaps get the most attention. Originally, I was thinking to identify those statements across the assessment that have what I would call flourishing connotations; from the different aspects of flourishing that my research had flagged up and that I had clustered within the *PPP motif*¹⁴⁷. In the end as URANUS only wanted to cover two of the seven components of the OSA, and I wanted to make enriching aspects more overt (and in explaining this section during the assessment process would allow that), I decided to focus on amending one of the sub-components, within the Strategic Thinking Component, as a specific assessment field that covered what would eventually be called Work Enrichment Approaches: *version 1.0* of the enriching factors (see below).

Still, because I wanted to understand how a broader interpretation of the enriching factors could be incorporated into the tool, I decided to attempt both (I was revising the whole tool for the future anyway as despite URANUS's preference for only two components – I gifted them the full tables in my final report), although I feel that this complete version requires much more work; notably as many of the factors appear under the Human Resources section.

From the literature I have covered, much of it looks at personally self-reported and subjective well-being measures. But (and it's a big but) my OSA tool looks at capacity assessment in a group setting, rather than individuals, on the organisation *per se*. So, it has meant that I have had to find ways to define the enriching/flourishing questions differently in order to represent organisational practices; or in other

¹⁴⁷ A lot of this is shown in chapters 3 & 5.

words to identify and incorporate potential enriching approaches from the wider literature, *Peer* discussions, and my observations. This meant making choices in defining:

- What are those elements in a workplace that could support personal flourishing (at work)? And how might they be grouped?
- How to describe them as organisational practices, processes or approaches, rather than a personal assessment?

The final list, as presented in the Work Enriching Approaches sub-component of the OSA, is shown here with the URANUS scoring (out of seven). Please note that they are also grouped under the *PPP*, with the first three being **Purpose** related, the second three to **Place** and the final three to **Practice**:

Code	Sub-Component	Average Score
SLE	Work Enrichment Approaches	5
Code	Statement	Score
SLE.1	Meaningful work: URANUS staff regularly reviews together how their activities and achievements are contributing to its overall purpose (mission, vision and goals).	3
SLE.2	Living values: URANUS ensures that all policies and structures support and sustain its core values.	5
SLE.3	Work-life balance: Work practices are mindful of employee needs; from a 'whole' person perspective (i.e. hours, stress reduction, telecommuting).	5
SLE.4	Relatedness: URANUS organises to strengthen co-worker relationships and understanding (i.e. supportive team work, conflict resolution, respectful practices, dialogue, fun).	5

SLE.5	Supervisor behaviour: Those managing staff are conscientious in their people management practices; and are expected to: mentor staff, give and receive feedback and build a trusting/positive work environment.	5
SLE.6	Solidarity: URANUS looks to provide 'fairness-based' pay, job security and supply decent working conditions.	4
SLE.7	Subsidiarity: Decision-making in URANUS is set at the (lowest) appropriate level and ensures staff participation.	5
SLE.8	Self-direction: Within clear guidelines, and to agreed (achievable) objectives and goals, employees are given maximum latitude in their roles.	6
SLE.9	Growth and development: URANUS exhibits a culture of reflection and learning in all activities; and appraisals focus on employee potential.	4

"Welcome to Hollywood, Just got a grip on how to get around"¹⁴⁸

On the day of the self-assessment I had massive anxiety and worries about how the session would go, a concern about the amount I planned to cover with them, and an apprehension over how the new Enriching Approaches sub-component would work out. Would they call it all into question and then would we be in *goat-country*?

I couldn't eat that morning and headed off early to get to the meeting rooms to get ready. It was peculiar, I have done this work many times (usually with a colleague though) and I have seen how it works, and how people begin to engage with it as an assessing and discursive process, yet I had never been quite so tense; an echo of JUPITER again or perhaps pressure from the inquiry?

We had fifteen members of the organisation signed up, around half of the entire staff, and from the executive director to campaigners, administrative staff, finance people, and communications. Not too

¹⁴⁸ Words to the song by Mitchel Musso.

large or too small, actually almost a perfect group to do this with. And well, in the end, it was an almost perfect session. Some of the discussion went too long, but the streamlining of the statements and the new formats helped immensely with the group, and while there were flashes of *goat* there were more flashes of teeth. It was actually fun.

On reflection I was glad how it had gone. Sure, we did not cover all I had wanted to and some of the statements were still a little unclear, but the process worked and the URANUS staff were engaged over the whole of a long-day (an enormous box of Swiss chocolate helped with the afternoon slump). My wife sent me an SMS asking how it went, she knew how nervous I had been, and it was good to give her a positive reply: *'happy and exhausted'*.

Interestingly my 'image'¹⁴⁹ of the organisation shifted when I saw them working together during the OSA, particularly when I listened over the recordings of the session to make notes and capture the discussion points. What I heard was a lot of laughter interspersed within the serious discussion. I started think of a new image for URANUS and recalled the famous Ellen DeGeneres 'selfie'¹⁵⁰ taken during the 2014 Oscars awards ceremony - a Happy-Selfie – how different from JUPITER.

Prioritisation and Presenting the Outcomes

There were a number of headline issues that came out of the whole assessment process. Some of which I had not foreseen from my earlier work on the OSA, particularly an acute realisation that the middle-managers were not fulfilling their role towards their own staff. In the process I use it is not enough to stop here and allow the consultant to draw the conclusions and prioritise, but that is also done by the staff involved. So, URANUS organised another half-day session to do this.

Almost all the original members of the OSA day turned up, but I saw that energy was down and carefully introduced the task and did some energising activities. In the end ten key areas were prioritised and the URANUS staff devised short *fiches* of the priorities identified and possible solutions or ways ahead. I

¹⁴⁹ All deference to Gareth Morgan (1986).

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/oscars/10674655/Oscars-2014-The-most-famous-selfie-in-the-world-sorry-Liza.html> 7th October, Daily Telegraph, By Harry Wallop 11:47PM GMT 03 Mar 2014

used these to prepare my assessment report (essentially the end of my ToR) that highlighted the main issues, assessed capacity deficits and suggested a way forward (using a change team).

The full report was shared with the Board of URANUS and an executive summary was posted to the staff. Melissa asked me to come and make a presentation to the staff face-to-face. I agreed. I made the presentation, again with a bit of nerves, but felt more confident in my approach – after all I was reporting what half of the organisation had determined. During it I used the image of the tree goats and the ‘selfie’ to raise-up the impressions I was getting about the organisation (which provoked some knowing laughter).

Prior to the session I was in Melissa’s office and I overheard Peter making a loud comment about the uselessness of the meeting and that we should get it over with. I was meant to hear it, Melissa looked at me and raised an eyebrow, I smiled back. In a way it was helpful for me as, when we came to a part on how the assessment revealed that meetings were not so effective, I directly mentioned what I had heard from the corridor (but not naming him). Certainly, while in some ways Peter was doubtful in his comments, he did appear to understand that some of the findings of the staff had a truth behind them. He also vocally supported an effort to deal with the priority issues.

The main downside was that few people volunteered to be a part of the Change Team, I was rather saddened by this as Angela had just gone onto a protracted sick leave and so Melissa was in need of some support from the staff. Still, when later Melissa asked me to prepare a ToR for this team, she eventually ended up with a group of six committed persons, and, I think, probably the most relevant ones. My formal role was over, it was good, but I felt not fully put to bed; with still many *intangibles* as to the future. My reflections at the time seem to cover this:

‘The presentation went fine, but I missed an opportunity to get it spot on, now I see I should have been more focused on the end results (the outcomes – the ideas and ways ahead – people want hard results, difficult in a more communicative space approach) and less on the middle parts which were too hard for those not involved to grasp its complexity.

Funny that I keep thinking about it - weeks after. I somehow knew I hadn’t got it quite right. I suppose my nerves got in the way beforehand (during it I was really calm – had to pull the expert card a few times). I was glad I stressed that OD is the job of everyone in this room, it’s not an add-on it is a part of your job in an organisation. [Yet] I was also disappointed that few of them volunteered to be involved. Drew did, he is the best by far and a potential leader of URANUS. But

the conversation needs opening up [for others]. As Melissa said after, “It’s funny that human character, they want to be involved and consulted, and yet then they want someone to lead them.”

Clear that Peter is a problem. He needs someone to sit him down and tell him he’s not helping. His comments were okay, but his attitude and body language was awful. Sitting directly opposite [across the room from] the director, making side jokes, prejudging – [implying] I am too busy to be here. It was great that I made a comment that I heard someone in the corridor commenting about how we should get this meeting over and get on, do the meetings better. I noted that I [said] this when it came to the part about meeting effectiveness (honestly, he is acting a bit pathetic). He doesn’t carry himself well (should realize he needs to project a better profile, more dignity). But he did buy into it more than I had expected.’ (Atkinson, R., N.D., Musings Diary)

And so, it goes on

On 15th May 2015, after moving my files to the closed project folder, I sat down and wrote a reflection piece on the whole six months. I think it says much of how the work has informed me, shaped my practice, given me place, and fed my sense of purpose:

‘This has been a bit of a rollercoaster of emotions. I have been so nervous and conflicted in parts, but then really soaring in others. I worked so hard on the tables and the new parts. I see some potential with it, but I also see that there is a real issue with the measurement of personal aspects in a group sense. It’s about conversations that are built. But also [the] means to take them forward (good piece in Coget on Dialogic Inquiry that says what I am looking to be doing). The two sessions (OSA and prioritisation) went really well in the end. A good group, lots of humour and [spirit].

Do I demand acceptance, is that a big need for me? Or is it professional respect. A combination of both I think. I have a fear of stepping too close, but also a desire to see them and help them to work things out. I see they need it, (the [OD] fiches were so, so). [Also] I had a very nervous time with the realisation that Peter was a sort of loose cannon. [He has so much experience and to

give, but I feel he lets himself down and others with the negativity. I think he is exhausted, and might be losing sight of things. What is it that unsettles me about it?]

Will they move forward? I somehow doubt it, seems they are overwhelmed; they need an outsider [to drive the pace]. I wrote to Melissa, very open and friendly, but I should call her. I wrote a ToR for the Change Team, but I think I need to do a quick and short ten points to be done. I was trying to avoid it [as my approach is for the organisation to lead and own its change process and build the capacity for it], but it would be a shame to lose the work. I feel I want to help, be a part, get to know them. I worry it will all end in a flat state. But Melissa is essentially alone, too many juniors, and the seniors are mostly siloed.

Perhaps I think I let myself down at the end, she seems to want my help though. I want to foster that relationship. Usefully, it ticks many boxes of the PPP, but the practice is the one that is being stretched here, too much or just those nerves????’ (Atkinson, R., N.D., Musings Diary)

Since I wrote this I have been contacted in the summer by Melissa. They are proceeding with the Change Team and will have a special session on this in their annual staff retreat. She asked if I could give some tips on structural issues and I prepared a thought piece for them. So, it seems that all was not stuck and, despite Melissa being alone in the senior management role, something is moving. Furthermore, the finance manager also came back to me looking for ideas on how to develop a middle-management training/coaching.

In conclusion:

Through this case study I was hoping to consider three main facets of my inquiry. I try to reflect back on them here. The first (a.) was to consider what my work means to me and my flourishing. To try and make some more sense I have gone through the text above and tried to cluster those sensations and feelings I had about the work. Naturally this is highly subjective, but then what isn’t.

The early senses I had related to the positive feedback I gained about why they had come back to me for this work (at the beginning and after). I also felt this later when I could see that as the work started to go well and they were satisfied. Certainly, I have a need for *feedback and approbation* from my work. I

suppose it comes from the connection to the people and also to feel *personally and professionally respected*; Melissa's recent note to me makes all the difference: "*I would like to express URANUS's great satisfaction from our cooperation*" (Melissa, personal communication, September 8, 2015).

I think this aspect speaks to a need for *relatedness in my work*, especially with those I admire. Certainly, I knew both Melissa and Angela from before, although not well, and I respect and admire them both as individuals and for their work. I enjoyed a level of *companionship and professional intimacy* that I know I miss from being an independent consultant. I also liked the other people in URANUS too, they are mostly young, dynamic, and good to work with, and they have commitment to their mission that I respect (even if I don't totally agree with their vision of the world). And this leads to another facet, I really value the support role I have, helping others to help themselves (a soft-mentoring/catalysing role) and getting them to laugh, although that does lead perhaps back to a need to feel the feedback.

That leads on to another aspect that made me feel good about the work. That is the mission or purpose of URANUS, and the fame of the organisation in my field, both *speaks to my purpose* towards civil society and democracy – an intrinsic deeply held worldview – and, I admit, a certain degree of reflected *kudos and esteem* from working with them (good for the CV too). This was certainly represented by me working like hell for them and probably underpinned why I took the work for a third of the pay I put in.

Funnily, in the wellbeing/happiness literature they (Pink, Stewart, Dolan) talk about *taking money off the table* (making it less important) as an aspect of intrinsic motivation. Financially, I learnt very little, but my situation of having other better paid work allowed me to take this on, and only once did I feel a bit undersold. But, and I think this was an enormous facet in my sense of flourishing was that I *learnt a lot*.

Working with URANUS was a giant opportunity to learn and to do new things professionally. It has driven me, and the inquiry, forward. I have relied to a measure on my known competencies, but have been able to develop from that, and to be daring to do some things differently. Perhaps this mirrors the middle-path of *challenge and competence* presented by Csikszentmihalyi's *flow* model.

Learning to better respond to and incorporate others ideas (the peer feedback from Adriana, that sometimes it can't be perfect and just go with what you can do; let them decide.) has been a good check against my natural '*the logic of it will show the way.*' *Letting it go* is okay; understanding others positions, but cautioning; watchfulness against looking for perfection and completeness; allowing things to develop organically.

Through this case study you will have noticed my *nervousness and doubts* at certain occasions; it didn't feel very flourishing at those times. As with JUPITER, it has been difficult to admit this in writing, but I have felt it important to expose and so to show a more complete picture. I think my initial fears were revolving around the stress of not messing-up this work. A sense that this is '*what I want to do in my career right now, but can I do actually succeed at it?*' What I called blowing the chance.

I have been dealing with that doubt, it is an aspect I have in my character, but more-and-more I have been able to let it go. I also know that it drives me, as well as hinders me, and my sense of work flourishing is perhaps counter-intuitively driven by those vocational qualms; to prove myself (thanks go to Mr Davis my brilliant geology teacher) and captures something of the *achievement and self-actualisation* elements of wellbeing theories. I am also learning to realise the limits of my practice, such as the conclusions I was making in the one-to-one interviews, and in the limit of control I have over any outcomes. I suppose I characterise this as *keeping a respectful self-belief*, and has also meant that I am learning to see more of the good than what was weak in my work.

Managing my tension has also been a part of professional growth when *dealing with conflict or resistance* in my work. I have done more to sit with and understand what others might be feeling. Such as Peter (or Daniel), and putting myself in his shoes. Realising that Peter is not against me, he is dealing with his own cosmos, and I deal it with his comments as best I could in the context I had, and in some way ameliorated his negativity. Here it has meant thinking more about listening, rather than jumping in and trying to convince; and fighting the JUPITER demons. Success in this certainly has feed into the practice elements of my professional sense of flourishing; *building competence*.

Perhaps one thing I do also find dissatisfying is that in my role I rarely see *the end product*, or enough of it; what URANUS would call impact. Often, it ends with a report or a presentation and the following actions and outcomes only reach me second- or third-hand. Perhaps it's almost a *parental* concern, or back to relatedness and community again, but I need to let go and trust I have done my best and they will be able to take it forward.

Still, I know do have a real want to see the end and the completion, but as a consultant with a limited brief it is usually lacking. I find that lack of resolution galling. It makes me wonder whether there is a need for me to have a professional life that includes some form of long-term involvement. Overall though the work has been stretching and interesting, gratifying and nerving, in summary I think I might be hooked to a feeling of *happy exhaustion*!

The second and third parts (b)., to understand where aspects of flourishing might be manifest in the organisational environment, and (c)., potentially lead to the development and trialling of practical *enriching* activities) are in some ways linked in this example. This was because the case has allowed me to engage the peer work and literature review on human flourishing and place it into the OSA tool I use as a cornerstone of my work. During the Pre-Assessment I could connect many of the issues of the middle-managers to diminishing aspects of the flourishing spectrum (*Meeting the Goats*).

What have I learnt? Well, while difficult and approximate, I'd found that it was possible to integrate the flourishing/enriching aspects into a version 1.0. I am quite happy with the *Work Enriching Approaches* sub-component as I find it gives a fairly broad range of enriching approaches with which to enter this discussion. Still I would like to see how to integrate the *PPP* aspects across the whole tool. It's tricky though, as I mentioned above this is a group/organisational measurement rather than an individual subjective measure.

I am also keen to follow-up on the issue of leadership and/or organisational assumptions on how to manage people and what that says about how far any organisation is will to go to consider a more human focus; *a la* McGregor. In some ways I have been toying with the idea that there are perhaps some attitudinal levels towards a human focus, say: rejection, compliance, decent work/good HR, and well-being/enrichment.

What I have missed though in this case is the follow-up to the OSA prioritisation and the opportunity to give direct support to building practical enriching approaches in the organisation. Certainly, at URANUS some of the findings of their OSA did point to the potential for a more enriching environment.¹⁵¹

However, my brief was limited. Despite this in the overall approach I take (self-determination of the assessment) and in some of the follow-on work (towards differing structures and the discussion of those that perhaps lean towards a more enriching environment) I have been able to do something.

¹⁵¹ The area of meaningful work, with regard to the sense of an impact was noted as a priority. In addition, while it was scored quite well the point on supervisor behaviour was more complex (within programmes the situation was surprisingly weak) and required some further debate. Also, there were key aspects under Human Resources that I highlighted (though outside the assessment focus).

Annex 4.2. – Drawing from the *Peer* diaries

To draw from these diary entries I have, keeping the various parts of the *PPP motif* in mind, read through them several times to note where we said we were flourishing or not, and what it was that was associated with them, also if there was any practice that seemed to arise from these situations, and finally to see how we assessed the day-to-day happenings within a longer-term evaluation. To open up these texts I have grouped, in that same order, those chief issues that were indicated by this review, and tried to link them to the previous discussions and to potential organisational practices. I note in bold those main facets that appear to be revealed in our words.

What appears to help us to ‘Flourish’

Unsurprisingly **development, growth, and learning** featured strongly in the day-to-day entries, such as for James, who had started a new job, or Adriana, when testing a new presentation approach:

‘A learning day – what looked like a relatively easy start to the day turned into a day-long research project, but learning to say maybe, rather than just yes, though with my last client still concerned I can get a bit too caught up in it rather than letting the facts tell the story.’

‘Flourishing day - a number of good learning experiences and feeling that I [am] playing the ball a bit more!’ (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

‘...doing something new, I was scared but I really enjoyed it, especially because it worked. One more round of positive feedback from the ... presentation, I start to enjoy being congratulated.’

(A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

For me, on a practice level, there is a question of how do I sustain such an impression of developing over time; how to build continuous improvement and growth into what I do? However, it appears to me that while much of the work we did on a daily basis contributed to this feeling, we actually tended to focus on specific aspects of it (success, completion, competence, or the work stream), rather than an overall developmental sense; as Liz and I both noted:

'...once I got in "flow" actually enjoyed working on it and felt like I was adding value to the initial work done by colleague. More flourishing [day] – feeling of being good at what I was doing, and of it being useful and potentially leading to more business.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

'Another good day, full of rain though, but really cranked on, got the [REDACTED] done, sent off, worked through the proposal with some great feedback from [REDACTED], and a good mood from [REDACTED]. Was a lot of sense of completion and that helped.' (R. Atkinson, personal work diary, November 30, 2015)

Still I have a feeling that these specific aspects point to work-day practices and there is another level where we base our progress on longer-term assessments – the contemplative – and perhaps Other practice considerations should be located there. Despite this we revealed a number of specific contributions to our positive daily evaluations. Primarily we felt positively when feeling that we **used our skills to good effect** (competence) and within our **own direction** (autonomy) is important:

'A flourishing day - putting more of my training into place for the first time and ...broadening what I can offer, and feeling that I can tailor my work more appropriately.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

'Felt like I drew upon my clinical experience well today.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016).

Seeing success or completion, like that which Mark noted in one entry, on a day-to-day basis was clearly an important part of evaluating positively:

'Afternoon was much better as we had breakthrough with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on anti-retroviral collaboration. Finally, able to move from e-mails and isolation to a little transparency: flourish if you feel everyone is on the same page and moving forward.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

And beyond that us and others **valuing what we do** (Purpose and meaning related) and **being valued**, and getting affirmative **feedback** on that (formally or informally), was significant:

'Flourishing day just feeling valued by the practice and clients – feeling I'm doing something of value.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

'...to see good results of the work; praise and recognition from [redacted]; to see that it was valued enough by the participants that it will continue in its own and by [redacted] to support another group.'
(A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

To me this would indicate a need for practices to note and recognize our achievements - especially from supervisors - as a confirmation. There is also I think an obvious connection here between feedback and **relatedness to others**. As feedback was validated, or made more authentic, when coming from others, as opposed to solely our own evaluation, and that appears to position effective **co-work/team work** as a supporting practice; as Liz noted:

'I concentrate much more easily when doing this [task] rather than working alone. Flourishing – enjoyed the interaction and the feeling of producing something “good” – reminded me that external “approval”/feedback is important to me.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

Although such a requirement for feedback also highlights the need for **open and genuine communication** between colleagues. Plus, a focus on how that is done, and as Andreas noted giving time for celebration:

'Series of regular meetings with direct reports, Regional Management Team meeting. WWF-Austria staff meeting and 10-year anniversary of [redacted] [redacted]. Nice to hear updates “from the field” at the WWF-Austria staff meeting. Nice celebration of [redacted]. Positive relationships – and a bit of champagne helps as well!’ (A. Beckmann, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

Indeed, an overriding *enricher*, I would almost dare to say the most powerful and connects with Paul Dolan's findings (2014, p.29), appears to be relatedness, this specific facet within my *Place* aspect, and the quality of **connections with others**. It was something we all needed and also links with **trust** (Laloux, 2014, p.82) and **engagement** literature (Stewart, 2013, p.48). There were a multitude of examples where this connection, either with colleagues or stakeholders, made many situations richer:

'Holding various conversations with interesting people, hearing about what they did and feeling a connection with them and their activities. Talking about what I do, being asked questions and people showing an interest.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

'...the openness, the open relationship we built so far, trust. The visit was done with [REDACTED], a colleague from the [REDACTED] office, it was good to work with a new colleague.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

'Good contact with supervisor and colleagues – productive, but also pleasant. I like working with these people!' (A. Beckmann, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

'Lovely flourishing work conversation with a wise peer/colleague. Very grounding.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

Both Kate and James related lovely encounters that I think further highlights this need, and also identifies practices that support having **genuine time for one another**: (Laloux, 2014, p.154-156)

'Saw some really nice patients and managed to go the extra mile for a couple of them and they appreciated it. One elderly couple came in and I've not seen them for a few years and the woman had developed dementia in this time, always sad. ... The lady had bright blue nail varnish and ... I complimented her on her nails, her husband said someone attends the care home and does it for her, anyway her face lit up and she started talking to us and she seemed very at ease all of a sudden, we had a little chat as we were not too busy.... The best bit of the day was the interactions with the patient and feeling like I am still improving how I do this and that I often get an immediate sense from the patient as to whether this is working or not. It's nice when you feel by being more yourself, maybe saying things to make the patient laugh or commenting on something you've noticed, you have the potential to make their visit more positive.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

'Hard day – dealing with client whose life has just totally crashed in the last 12 months, and far from your stereotypical client – articulate, educated, not used to asking for help - but just makes you appreciate just how close to the edge we all are. [But a] 'Flourishing day – whether or not applications etc. are successful just felt I made a difference to someone by just being there.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

And perhaps allied to this, although less mentioned, was the positive sensation coming from a coaching or **mentoring role**: *'Taught my assistant how to use a bit of editing software'* (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016).

I believe that the implications of this *Place* facet for human flourishing and consequently towards organisational practice are hard to overestimate. **Personal connections**, from the stakeholders (Stewart, 2013, p.63 & 79) to the colleagues and co-workers, speak to the *why* of what we are doing and social meaning (Deranty & Dejours, 2010, p.172). So, hearing from James again:

'Enjoy our team days and actually did the things I set out to do (on the whole!). Always a great osmotic learning experience, just from having conversations and overhearing conversations, and a real release valve from the week of being upbeat and on the ball. [A] Flourishing day – working with a great team, who are more than happy to share the[ir] knowledge and experience.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

Relatedness to me has become an underpinning context for my own flourishing, somehow without it I feel sort of adrift. This has been an important realization for me via this inquiry, where I had once thought *Place* was more about my connect to the organisation and its mission/purpose, now I see that the solidarity and positive team spirit, connected to *Place*, is eventually the paramount facet of this aspect. I think my experience of coming from a broken bond with one of my former workplaces (an organisation I had strongly identified myself with) had skewed my thinking to the primacy of identifying with the organisation and, consequently, I had underestimated people in this *Place* equation. Which, when I think of it, is somehow odd as I had spent so much energy weathering the organisational storm to, in my mind, protect them. The collegial relatedness certainly appears to be a missing ingredient in Kate's diary, as, other than the positive interactions with her clients and student, there is no evident camaraderie or supervisor support.

I wasn't surprised by most of those facets that gave us positive feelings in our working days as they were generally resonant with my own experience and much of the work motivation/wellbeing literature. Yet an unexpected facet was that in all of our diaries we mentioned **environmental conditions** – like the weather - and how they mirrored our mood about the day. I wrote myself: *'...The sun was shining and work went well and easily at first. It was a good moment and a good day, got some stuff done and things began to move'* (R. Atkinson, personal work diary, November 30, 2015); others noted similar feelings:

'Warm day, hyacinths in bloom on my desk made it good.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

'I didn't spend any time outdoors today... that contributes negatively to my sense of the day too as I am just in work mode....' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

'Flourishing. Getting out of the house was the first good thing about the day! The weather was good – blue sky – which instantly makes me feel more positive. Feeling part of a group, and part of an activity.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

In Herzberg's motivation theory office conditions are a hygiene factor and mainly reduce motivation not enhance it. Perhaps this shows how a sense of flourishing is different from motivation to work? No, we are not motivated by hyacinths in bloom (unless we are a gardener), but it does speak to our aesthetic-sense, our spirit, and that is I think strongly connected to our human flourishing, the environment we are in. If the weather is grim, or our societal conditions poor, it must connect to us as people surely. As such I feel that these comments are rather indicating *when* we are in a flourishing moment, and, I would conjecture, that when actively noticing our environment it shows we are both more aware and at peace; perhaps contemplative. Personally, though, I find I can become distracted and start to procrastinate if I start to *look outside* too much. Although as I have mentioned I do like to think things through and sometimes need to get outside to break an impasse, but that seems, at least for me, to relate to deeper issues and so I would be wary of over emphasising this as a practice implication.

What seems to diminish our work experience?

On the other side our diary entries raised a number of factors that seemed to diminish our sense of flourishing in a day. Notably, and perhaps obviously, those feelings of **failure**, the opposite of success, appeared as a common disappointment to us all. But again, as with the positive development effect, we rather wrote about the facets behind this sense of failure. Being **unproductive**, despite working hard, was one facet illustrated by Louise:

'Felt unproductive. Seemed achieved so little in so much time, but working all the time.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

Yet the need to see progress, and not just to be working, is more complex than I had first thought, Laura's observation is important:

'Again, productive, but largely a sense of juggling multiple things and not necessarily being in flow with anything particular.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

So, even when we are busy and ticking things off our 'to-do-lists', it might not be enough if we **cannot connect to that work** and the task being done. I have noticed in my diary, and in the case work, how my own inability to engage with a client, or being disconnected from a task for whatever reason, diminished my sense of *Purpose*, undermined my professional *Practice*, and loosened my *Place* within it. To me it indicates that a strategy of daily *small-wins* (Meyersen & Scully, 1995, p.594-595), if those things being won are not important to us, is not enough. In the end, and as a practice point this is crucial, it is a fallacious strategy - one of *death by a thousand cuts* - and we cannot ignore the longer-term context to our daily-work. As one of my entries reads:

'...I found it hard to get going, I got frustrated by the [redacted] work, somehow irritated and a feeling of compression and task. ... it was in an imperfect way to do [it], sort of messy and stupid, and doing things that were academic and not needed, and wrong, and for people who would not listen, and [who] would just impose [it] on others, and it would be a drain on them. ... I think it was that I knew what I did wasn't being listened to and that there was little logic in it, [a] being caught in the system feeling. I suppose I also felt my colleague wasn't so supportive, she is too busy and just wants me to get it done and out of the way.' (R. Atkinson, personal work diary, November 30, 2015)

I still completed this piece of work, and felt some satisfaction in doing what I could (exhibiting competence), even though I had not been listened to (low levels of self-direction or decision-making). However, I think that it signifies that contemplating how our daily work contributes to our career-story is important; they cannot be separated. In other words, where, and how, do we make the evaluation or assessment of our daily work and its meaningfulness and connection to our professional life? In terms of organisational practice and job design I feel this is a big question.

Also a sense of failure and disappointment in ourselves, or others, appears as a clear *diminisher*, especially if we are powerless to address the problems which have caused it (**low power** or **revealing our inabilities**):

'Neutral or languishing: [redacted] will be a failed project, I know it. I wish people ([redacted]) would have a more open mind, this is where I see leaders damaging organisations.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

More importantly **how we deal with failure** is central here from an organisational practice perspective. I think especially of the way failure is viewed by us and, in particular, the impact derived from an

organisation's culture, when it is exposed, and how that is potentially damaging or liberating (Stewart, 2013, p.94-101). This is also linked to the **nature of feedback** from others, particularly supervisors, or rather the lack of it or the lack of the right sort does seem to be a key *diminisher*. This was quite prevalent for Kate as she noted: *'it feels like the only time anyone says anything about what I do it is to complain...'* (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016); which links to the *Supervisor Behaviour* aspects I noted under *Place*.

As we saw occurrences of relatedness was noted as an important *enricher* of our daily experiences of work. On the other side **lower levels of relatedness** were, in the extreme, notable where a peer seemingly avoided their colleagues. Kate appeared to be at a particularly low ebb:

'...in my role now I am very much working on my own. There is little time to interact with your colleagues, except at lunchtime, so not much of a feeling of teamwork, then when you do interact with your colleagues it can be more the negative stuff that comes out.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

And others were wary of the **agenda of others** being foisted onto them:

'All meetings today. No productive time. More neutral to languish. Best part is not walking away with any new work.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

Often this seems to be because, as in the situation of Kate, her work was essentially insular but is impacted on by an unconnected management practice, and for Mark his sense of having enough to do already. With Kate's example, when it gets to this point there is an apparent dysfunction between her work task and her relationship with the organisation. Others took these connections to diminishing between **work overload**, **ineffective meetings**, and **isolation** further:

'I feel a bit [of] sense of responsibility for multiple projects at the moment and a bit isolated.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

'Another day full of meetings, truly overwhelming, I am not sure what I can do about this. One needs to talk and keep conversations going, but then it takes so much of the time. Sometimes you come to the end of the day wondering what was it all about? And there is no time to prepare properly for these meetings, they are so ad-hoc, no objectives, sometimes no decisions....' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

'A half-day meeting without decisions. A true struggle for power in a diplomatic, passive aggressive setting.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

Again, I find there are practice aspects of subsidiarity, decision-making and how we manage co-/teamwork. Perhaps allied to this was a fairly common frustration among us of not being able to **control our schedules**, or our planning being knocked awry by others. In other words, while we want a pace to our work, it needs to be controllable: stretch but not overload; control but not underload:

'...things didn't get ticked off how I'd like. Watched clock, but only because worried wouldn't get everything done. More time to pace things better. ...worried about looming deadlines.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

'Frustrating day clients not showing again, need to look at ways of dealing with DNA's (do not attend) in other ways – offering telephone advice etc. Languishing day sometimes having too much time on your hands is more difficult to manage than having too little Contingency planning.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

It seems to be the unexpectedness, the things thrown at us, that appears to exacerbate this feeling of losing a sense of control, especially when coupled to perceived meetings inefficiencies, intransigence of others, or unheralded tasks. And it does not only have to come from work sources, as Louise revealed when she wrote:

'Late again, due to late takeover by [my ex-partner], so worked from home at start. Realised suddenly under pressure to get [REDACTED] journal out by 15 April deadline (referendum rules), and need to apply for award by deadline tomorrow - all need to do by weekend (away next week). Worked hard, on [REDACTED] and infographic. Lots of editing. Josie's birthday tea broke up day. Finished at 7pm,... progress made, head down, not out of woods yet.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

On the other hand, though we did all note that we also would require newness in what we do. Many of us wrote in our diaries about **repetitiveness**, or a **lack of variety**, and it appears to be *diminishing* aspect. Yet I don't flourish just because I have a work trip to Madrid or Amsterdam, even though I enjoy it. It is what it brings to me in term of learning and growth that matters to me and I think this *diminisher* comes from recognising when we have fewer opportunities to develop and is not about novelty *per se*.

And nor does it mean just loading more into a job (*'Job loading merely enlarges the meaninglessness of the job'* (Herzberg, 1987, p.10)); as Kate explained:

'And it's kind of same old same old every day. So lack of variety. The patients can be very demanding and there's no let up from seeing them. I've deskilled, lots of skills I have used in previous jobs I don't use any more. When I have been given extra responsibilities I've not been given much, if any, time to do them, so rather than feel that they are giving me an opportunity to progress at something non-clinical, maybe, they just make the job more stressful.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

Administration, rules, and waste are rather clearly not this group's cup of tea. Kate, Andreas, and several others, wrote about this facet:

'Arrived to be told off for not signing out of the building the night before. I'd stayed late to catch up with work e-mails, missed one train, decided to use the time to catch-up on more e-mails, then had to make a run for the next train and decided not to sign out of the building as it is a faff and I'd have missed yet another train. So the office manager told me off first thing today. Great start! I don't know any other [similar]... department that is like this. People I trained with who work elsewhere can't believe it. ... So, I've only been in 10 minutes and I feel like I'm being treated like a child.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

'Notary: I hate senseless bureaucracy and waste – 50 Euro for a signature!! [REDACTED] stood me up, again – a waste of my time and a lack of respect for me....' (A. Beckmann, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

In fact, the high number of comments makes this a notable *diminishing* facet, but it was my sense that administration in itself was not the issue, but rather the **administrative culture**. Whether it is **applied inflexibly** - particularly in an unresponsive manner - and if it impinged on people's limits of autonomy or organisational subsidiarity. There are key organisational practice implications here.

Plus, in Kate's case the unforgiving administrative practices seemingly exacerbated that imbalance she feels in her working-life - a balance that she craves - and the imposition that this work demonstrates to her. I became to feel that this, and perhaps additional petty annoyances, actually were symptomatic that her current work is not contributing enough to her life - the real issue for a flourishing work-life. And staying in it, and continuing to look for an outer-arc of flourishing, was a hamstrung strategy. In

short, not only did her work not help her to flourish, but it was actively diminishing. This brought me back to a previous realisation, that there is a **balance in our working experiences required** across all of these *PPP* aspects and, as in Kate's example, without that the prospect of work supporting a flourishing life was restricted (and was thus indicated by an individual's desire to rebalance work and life).

A few other *diminishing* factors that were presented in the diaries, such as problems with infrastructure or a perceived lack of status, however, the final issues of note related to **decision-making**, or rather the limits to personal decision-making and, the oft cited, **lack of leadership clarity** (in decisions themselves or who was meant to make them). There is more on this in the section on practices below.

Practices to help us flourish

Within the diaries we tried to identify what it was that gave us a more positive or negative experience in a day and how something might be done differently to enhance our experience. Within this section I sought to draw these out, and, as well as adding to the list of facets above, to indicate some personal or organisational practices (daily and longer-term).

What seems to be immensely important is a need, at least in this group, for freedom to be creative, with most of us expressing a desire for more **creativity** and coupled to those learning and development wishes we saw above. This desire was often linked to expressions of **teamwork**, team creativity if you like, and to work creatively with others. As a guide to organisational practice this is very useful:

'There's a limit to how creative this role can be. There certainly isn't much excitement, I miss that, I've had jobs before when there were times when it was exciting, we organised a conference, discovered something new and interesting through focus groups or interview-based research, and I guess kind of wrap-up and consolidate all that interestingness and present it somehow, in a report, article etc. I guess it was about feeling like I was working as a team on something and we had something to show for it that we felt proud of and we'd achieved something. ... I suppose if I felt I was being developed more and given more opportunities to develop and learn new skills and feel like I was making progress which wasn't all down to me engineering it myself.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

'Flourishing component was a 90-minute peer consultation support Skype with a group I pulled together. Creative, attentive, diverse, open-minded, honest. Very fulfilling. Remainder was much as the rest of the week - demanding, productive and neutral.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

'Positive day, getting out and being in a group of new people, many of whom are very different from my normal contacts, was interesting and made me think about things in a new way. Reminded me that it is easy to get "stuck" in a particular way of thinking if I continually interact with the same limited group and challenging my thinking is a good thing.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

'A few meetings with other internal teams who want feedback on their initiatives. I do enjoy the creative process and being consulted for ideas.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

The **effectiveness of meetings** was highlighted by a few of the peers as a potential practice point, to ensure that they are effective and productive. Mark's called for *'Meetings that decide or close rather than process,'* as he feels that *'long meetings, like policies, kill creativity and productivity'* (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016). This is an area worth considering, and seems to me to be linked to the issues behind effective and appropriate decision-making. Although I'd be cautious of meetings that jump to conclusions, as I value the process of dialogue in change.

Coming from several peer comments, **decision-making** practices, and giving people an effective **voice** at work, is a practice theme to consider:

'It's also feeling like I don't have much of a voice. ... I wish I had some clout and/or felt I could actually say how annoying all this stuff is and suggest alternative approaches (I think I am a good 'ideas' person and I thrive when I can collaborate and develop ideas with others, but I have never found this very satisfactory in a very hierarchical organisation, where if you are lower down in the pecking order you/your ideas/your experience/strengths don't seem to count for much,...' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

'I wish I was more powerful to influence things at work. I don't feel I have a place or space for this. I am not sure what I can do about it?' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

'Frustration that I can't influence this partnership.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

This points to practices that enable self-direction, choice, and subsidiarity in decision-making, and **appropriate involvement**. Although I do wonder how much of the difficulties experienced are organisational limits or are those limits we set ourselves.

Another perhaps obvious, but nevertheless important, call was the clear need from us to **prioritise and plan** our time. This echoes, I think, from the feeling for self-direction and ability to choose or working pace, to have control over our **work schedule**. It was also an issue related to procrastination I saw identified particularly by those of us that were self-employed and spending a lot of our time alone.¹⁵² It feeds back into the desire for achievement and we have become a lot of list makers:

'So I identified a few must do's for today to do at work and I did them. That felt good.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

'I worked through a short-list and it was good to tick them off. Gaining some control. I think I have to say no to a few things, I am really in a good place, but something in the air is dragging me back. Think that I got things done made it more of a flourishing day. I talked with some interesting and open people.' (R. Atkinson, personal work diary, November 30, 2015)

But Liz and Adriana, I think, made an important link from their daily priorities to their overall longer-term objectives; in a way an ordering:

'Having a structure/plan for the day. It's my continual struggle – I hate being pinned down and too planned, but if I don't have any plan, I drift. Maybe it being part of a more detailed plan? i.e. having a monthly plan of action for each business area so I can relate the day and activities back to an overall objective.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

'We need more focus in our work, sometimes doing lots of things is flourishing, but it can become frustrating.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

There was evidently a wish for more **time to think**; what I would call 'head-time':

¹⁵² We noted that the internet becomes a double-edge sword: good for connectivity and yet a tool of procrastination.

'Flying. Having 10 hours in the air is a great chance to read, think and plan. Flourish. Business class helps. ... Read and write day. Happiest when I have a length of quiet time and time to reflect or read.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

Yet I feel these aspects are linked to our expressed need for the right amount of work pressure, and engagement with others, to get us moving. Some sort of optimum balance in work energy; a sort of *work metronome*:

'Today was a good day. Just one meeting and the rest of the day was focused on moving things forward in a few important projects: the self-financing in the [REDACTED], governance work in [REDACTED]. I have a feeling of being overwhelmed and I am not sure how I can change this. On the other hand, I work best in pressure conditions – I can focus. Otherwise I can procrastinate.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

Mentioned above were that need for **connections** and relatedness with others in our work (linked under *Place* and with solidarity). In terms of practice this appears another vital area to consider, how we interact with others:

'Began the day with some organising and then had a long, long talk with [REDACTED] [a business partner]; really helped. I needed that connection and the discussion. I think there is a realisation that I need these check in. Reminds me of the talks with [REDACTED] every day at [REDACTED]. I think [REDACTED] might want them too. Also, I felt the need for my wife to be around and to speak with her. Important for the independent that connection and reduces the stress of loneliness.' (R. Atkinson, personal work diary, November 30, 2015)

'More variety of interactions with people - calls/meetings, etc., and less computer-based work.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

'Great day. Facilitated the team annual planning retreat, which was a creative, positive experience. Teambuilding and facilitation is a task I thrive on.' (M. Saalfeld, personal communication, March 29, 2016)

I feel we should work on **building Place**, in terms of relatedness and solidarity, in organisations much more than we currently do. Sure, this is touched upon by team-building exercises or engagement strategies, but I think as a core aspect of a flourishing environment there should be a serious

consideration of the structures, processes and practices which can underpin this. We shouldn't see the feeling expressed by Kate in an *enriching organisation*:

'Feel like I don a mask in that sense, just get on with the job and try to ignore the hugely annoying and patronising stuff, which, somewhere like ■■■ [Louise's workplace] would never have got to be an issue, because I would have felt we could have talked it through and all treated each other like adults with more respect for each other's strengths and made the right decision together.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

A practice subset of this is perhaps **authenticity of feedback**. Indeed, there was a keen wish from all of us to have either more meaningful or better focussed feedback:

'If we got more positive feedback from our managers, we do get stuff, but it is usually in an e-mail 'well done you're an ace team.' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

'Was told I'm appreciated in [my performance] appraisal and staff want me to push them more.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

By comparing the experiences here of Kate and Louise, from *A Tale of Two Sisters*, I have noticed several key differences between their practical work experiences. The issue of appreciative feedback, authentic appraisal and open communication is one core area; and another being the clear difference in collaborative work and personal relatedness. In terms of a more flourishing practice I feel that performance management and appraisal require a fresh approach that incorporates much of these *enriching* facets we have highlighted.

A final practice identified, that leads onto the discussion about daily experiences versus long-term assessments of flourishing, was a need to **take time to reflect, individually and collectively**, on our work, as James proposed:

'Probably taking time to reflect on the day at the end of the day, and while being constructively self-critical, also accepting that I should be proud of what I am doing.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

Liz mentioned how doing the diary had helped her to do this (see below), and I wonder how this might be worked into an organisational setting and how it both requires and builds trust and a communicative spirit. I saw how there might be a change from the performance to the **development appraisal** or

purpose review in a flourishing-focussed organisation. Also, there were Peer suggestions for building in a **coaching** or mentoring approach:

'Coaching session today. ... Coaching always helpful and enlightening, made me think and feel better about things.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

'Some personal coaching/supervision I think - a chance to just take stock of what this relentless 'doing' is in support of and a reminder that there are real beneficiaries of what feels very office based at the mo...' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

Future Implications

At the end of the diary-keeping period I had posed a question: *if you put this knowledge of your month, and those things you thought might make it different, how could you go about acting: day-to-day or long-term career?* I wanted to approach the issue I had about whether our daily senses of flourishing were congruent with flourishing over time, and consequently practices for flourishing through work in organisations. Let me share some of our thoughts with you, firstly from our *sisters* Kate and Louise:

'I feel the extent to which I flourished ... I had engineered myself. I guess to some extent that is to be expected, I should take some responsibility for that myself. ... Although my caveat would be that this is maybe not my ideal way to flourish. Or, perhaps more accurately, I don't want to this to be the only way I flourish at work, it is too limiting in scope to only be able to flourish this way. ... This is why I wanted to go part-time so that I had time to develop my own alternative activities, which I'd never get to do in my role and also I wouldn't want to develop my creative capacities in this role or with this employer. Very early on I had to separate myself very much from my working role, not identify with it at all, it's just a way to make some money, it's not all bad, I do good for the patients, which is satisfying, but if I derive much identity from what I do it would be a bit soul destroying' (Kate, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

I sense that Kate has *removed* herself from her workplace as it **presents limited benefits** to her. While there are some positive elements, interactions with patients, doing a needed and socially valuable task, the overriding sensation I have is of someone marking time and eventually securing no benefits from her

work through its alienating working practices. She strives for the positive balance, in her work-life balance, in areas outside work, but I have come to feel that off-setting a diminishing work environment appears doomed to fail. Not least as we are losing so much of our potential time to it. Now to Louise:

'I'm surprised by how dull and repetitive my work appears on paper. And actually it is in one-way, i.e. I spend most of my days reshaping people's writing, editing and polishing - adding our voice. Though the content varies and interests me and the discussions and interactions with colleagues aren't captured here, which contribute a lot to making the work pleasurable.'

'It also seems quite unstructured which is a bit of an issue for me, i.e. things come at me and I'm reactive more than proactive, which means I don't have much control. I expect that and am used to it, but I think that becomes psychologically habitual for me - i.e. I give in to that and don't exercise power I could to get more of a grip on my schedule. Actually I like it when it's really busy and I'm driven by deadlines, when that lulls I feel a bit useless and languid - though that is the time I should be making plans and shaping things up. It's quite a dissatisfactory feeling for me - not to feel that I am driving things along, but I'm ambivalent about it too as I like being externally driven. I'm best when challenged and under pressure to produce.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

She learned from this work that perhaps for her work practice and sense of flourishing she needs to:

'Find more of an authoritative, management mode to operate in. Be bolder and more proactive about driving things. Focus more on impact. Get rid of the ambivalence. Feel more confident about expressing my view. Stop hiding behind the mountains of work when they come as an excuse not to tackle these things. All things I have discussed and am working on (slowly) with my coach.' (Louise, personal communication, April 16, 2016)

Overall Louise appears in a healthy relationship with her work, colleagues and supervisor. That she has a coach (for a mid-level staff member that is refreshing) appears to help set an **ambiance of reflection** for her to explore her. Sure, it doesn't solve all the day-to-day work undulations, but she seems to be in a better frame that offers more potential for her to flourish at work. Adriana also seems to be in a good place, these were her observations:

'I realise that I get very motivated and enthusiastic when setting up projects, but then I lose drive and motivation until I see some results. I need more patience and maybe focus to go deeper in some of the projects.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016).

Importantly, for a contemplative outlook, she indicates that, while there are short-term successes that she can see, the longer-term outcomes are harder to see, and she notices that need for more patience and deepness. I will come back to this in my own reflection below, but some more from her:

'I can see that [a] recurring pattern is about having a feeling of doing good work, being recognised for it, doing new things, etc. And yes, overall I can say that I am flourishing in this job, more than I have ever been (maybe at [redacted] [previous employer] was similar in certain periods). Is this good? How? Does it motivate me to work hard – I guess yes. I like coming to the office, I love my work. I would like to see more results though, more depth so maybe this is where I can concentrate more in the future.' (A. Crăciun, personal communication, March 15, 2016)

She is clearly engaged in what she is doing, I would say it speaks to her *Purpose* and *Practice* needs and it drives her (contrast with Kate's experiences). Furthermore, she wants to be there, a *Place* for her, but still she knows there is the potential for frustration for her, and is questioning how can they be addressed by looking for further development (leadership, decision-making, managing overload with limited capacity, looking for tangible results).

James's reflection underscores the earlier observations about learning and development as a necessary and ongoing part of our sense of flourishing. This is in part as he had started in a new position, but despite that it shows someone thinking about their career and life and demonstrating how this **feeling of progression** contributes their life; it's seemingly worth looking for:

'Good day – team back together in our old office and an interesting day of training on employment issues, but it also tied into stuff I'd learnt from the law course. A flourishing day [that] brought together all of I've been trying to do in making a career change and it seems to be working.'

'Flourishing day, starting to see more clearly how I can manage the workload particularly in terms of the background work – seeing enquiries as a type and less of start from scratch every time... feeling I have something to add to the story and people valuing my input.'

'I think I am generally flourishing, possibly linked to me moving from being the 'rookie' to be able to deliver a service. Still in the honeymoon period in some ways, and still enough newness for it to be exciting and stimulating. But I think it's just that I am doing something I feel passionate about and can do it.' (J. Friel, personal communication, March 3, 2016)

There is a matching here of his **conscious aspirations**, an honesty of what he wants to do and what he can do, and how he is gaining competence that helps him to flourish broadly. It, I think, shows that we have **self-responsibility towards looking for our own flourishing** (and it takes effort). This is fundamentally important to this thesis, as I believe that it is not only up to an organisation and its management to find ways to enrich us at work, but that we also have to be engaging actively and contemplatively in that endeavour. Laura works as an independent OD consultant, her reflection, I find, builds on that of James's and deepens the complexity of looking for the work that enables us to flourish:

'I am tired now (on the train on the way home) but do feel that it was a productive day. Productive is not the same as flourishing though - I don't feel I developed much today - I just put my existing skills to good use. And my sense of flourishing is more present when I have been really creative and designed new things rather than managed projects.'

And,

'Not much personal development/breakthrough stuff today - and that starts to be a theme for me of what I regard as underpinning flourishing - I either co-create with people to bring about something new or I catalyse breakthrough in others. Now I reflect, there was one call which I led with my co-deliverers on a beautiful leadership programme where I felt a sense of being in that zone... but it was short-lived!' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

I believe Laura is pointing to our desire for something bigger, more than the *daily-bits*, and a real need to connect with others over many levels. I would typify this as having **real quality** in our work, and that is perhaps an important part of the development and stretch facets identified earlier. We don't just want to be busy and ticking off tasks, we want quality-work that develops us and stretches us to grow. She gave a wonderful reflection on the month:

'I had a great conversation with Simon [her husband] today about my experience of this new style of working compared with what I was doing last year. The reality is that I am simply project managing lots of different pieces of work. The skill is in the juggling - understanding what needs

attention when and how to crack through stuff. To focus and defocus when required. The reality is that it's very dull compared to what I usually do - which is actually be out there in the field delivering. When I look at the financial projections for this year, this kind of work is very lucrative as I orchestrate the delivery of others. But it's ultimately unfulfilling on the flourishing level. My sweet spot - the place of flow - is where I have to be fully present (emotionally, physically, intellectually) and steer in the moment to help a group or individual achieve an outcome/breakthrough/learning. It's the place of flow where I am just enough - essential and irrelevant - curating a learning experience for people. The reality of the current work I am doing is that there isn't enough of this sweet spot and for all the money it may generate, it's not enough of a reason to do it. This really put into context the notion of flourishing - it really is about being able to do the work that most challenges me, where I make my biggest contribution and where I learn most. It isn't always with clients though - it's with my peers too - where I am held to my highest potential. This reflection is helping me explore how I want to shape my professional life for the remaining part of my working life where I intend to work intensely.' (L. Lewin, personal communication, February 29, 2016)

In her diary Laura has seemingly identified the facets of work that she finds help her sense of flourishing. Her words also perhaps reinforce my view that we have a **responsibility to reflect** on these issues and that we try to seize control of our working lives in the moment and over time; both *carpe diem* and *carpe vitam*. There was an incredible resonance with Liz, the other trainer in the *Peer Group*:

'Mixture of flourishing and languishing to be honest, I very much enjoyed the coaching, and the feeling that I was really facilitating someone to help themselves. In addition the "being good at something" element was there too. However I found that trying to identify why I wasn't doing more of this left me feeling quite frustrated and directionless. I think that feeling has been bubbling along beneath the surface for a while, and I have been able to ignore it whilst busy with moving house and other distractions. Hmmm.' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

Liz mentioned how by the end of the month she could feel that she was procrastinating too much, yet the **awareness** that she gained from doing her diary allowed her to pinpoint those longer-term issues that had perhaps been sliding and she now wanted to address. It is a lovely piece of honest self-reflection:

'Some of the realisations I have made whilst doing this log mean that I recognize where I can make some changes to my working day/life that I believe will enhance my feeling of flourishing. When I first started recording my day and analysis of it, I was a bit resistant to look too closely, as I was feeling frustrated about the lack of work my businesses have. This definitely contributed to the times when I felt that I was languishing, and if I look honestly to the month, and at a few months before, is how I was feeling often. I also suspect that having changed my home environment recently means that this lack of actual work is a lot more "obvious" to me – both in that I have more free-time and less distractions, and also in that it is more obvious to people around me – which also makes me think that some of the elements of flourishing for me include "respect"? from others for the work I do....' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016)

Furthermore, when evaluating the day-to-day versus the longer-term evaluation, Liz demonstrates, to me, how the perspective of our interpretation presents us with a very different answer as to whether we are flourishing or not. I find her words below reinforced my developing view that, while we need to attend to the day-to-day activity level, we really should consider that it is the longer-term, more **contemplative, assessment** where we gain our eventual sense of flourishing. There are tangible personal and organisational practice implications to this; some of which she starts to address:

'It is interesting how when evaluating the day, I tended to focus on the "good" and land on a flourishing mark for the day, whilst I would honestly mark the month as middle to languishing. I guess I have a tendency to downplay the "bad", as do many of us.'

'Day to day, I recognize now that I need a loose plan to each day, with some core goals/to do list, something to get me focused and also to deliver that sense of satisfaction, so basically to make sure I am ticking elements of Purpose and Practice each day. I also recognize that I can easily ignore the lack of these for considerable periods, but my overall feeling will be more languishing, even if I'm not acknowledging why! In addition, I have tended to define "work-life" balance as not feeling work pressure, whereas I now realise that not enough work can have something of a negative impact too – I knew this many years ago, but I think many years of working crazy hours and suffering extreme work stress have wiped that knowledge – or more likely, led me to avoid overwork and boss/peer/work induced pressure at all cost!'

'I have realised the importance of my surroundings, the actual environment I am working in, and have put in place measures to make sure I have somewhere that I can happily work, as well as making sure my plans include meeting and collaborating with other people on a regular basis.'

'Long term – I am currently working on a longer-term strategy for both parts of my business, taking a holistic view of what I want my life, both work and other, to be. This is where planning for interaction, to ensure I satisfy the needs of relatedness and solidarity comes in. I am going back to basics and reviewing what I do to see where I am meeting, or conflicting my core values and anti-values. This process has really made me think about what I am doing and encouraged me to go right back to basics – why did I want to be self-employed, in the field I work in, and am I making the most of the opportunity I have to do this? This is actually a perfect time for me to be doing this, so thank you!' (E. Marsden, personal communication, March 17, 2016, my emphasis)

And finally to myself, well I put many of my thoughts and revelations into the remarks above and recognise myself too (especially: the need to connect with others, a desire to control my own agenda, to continue to persevere, and requiring a bit of a push and authentic work to stop my procrastination), but the main finding that came from my own reflection has revolved around my impression that there is a variance between the day-to-day sense of achievement and the long-term feeling of flourishing. I wrote:

'I am noticing that while stuff gets done (small wins) and I have connects with people, actually this is not really sense of achievement in a bigger picture which I would probably evaluate as helping me to flourish. They are micro-moments and it would need a larger scale feeling or a period of these to build into an evaluative HF moment.' (R. Atkinson, Personal work diary, November 30, 2016)

As I have argued earlier, there are profound implications to this. Solely focussing on day-to-day management practices, or personal small-wins, for an enriching organisation would not, in my view, fully deliver a flourishing work environment. As potentially that smacks of being productive without a purpose, or active without development. We need to connect with, perhaps even daily, and have an awareness of, our **longer-term evaluation of our Purpose**. Therefore, to me blends of short- and long-term practices are needed.

Annex 4.3. – *Vita activa-vita contemplativa*: A philosophical diversion

There is another strand that, while quite theoretical (bringing in the work of Hannah Arendt), interweaves with my ideas about how of flourishing and the centrality of work. It helped give me additional definition to my overall conception of workplace flourishing although is annexed here as I felt it was perhaps a diversion too far.

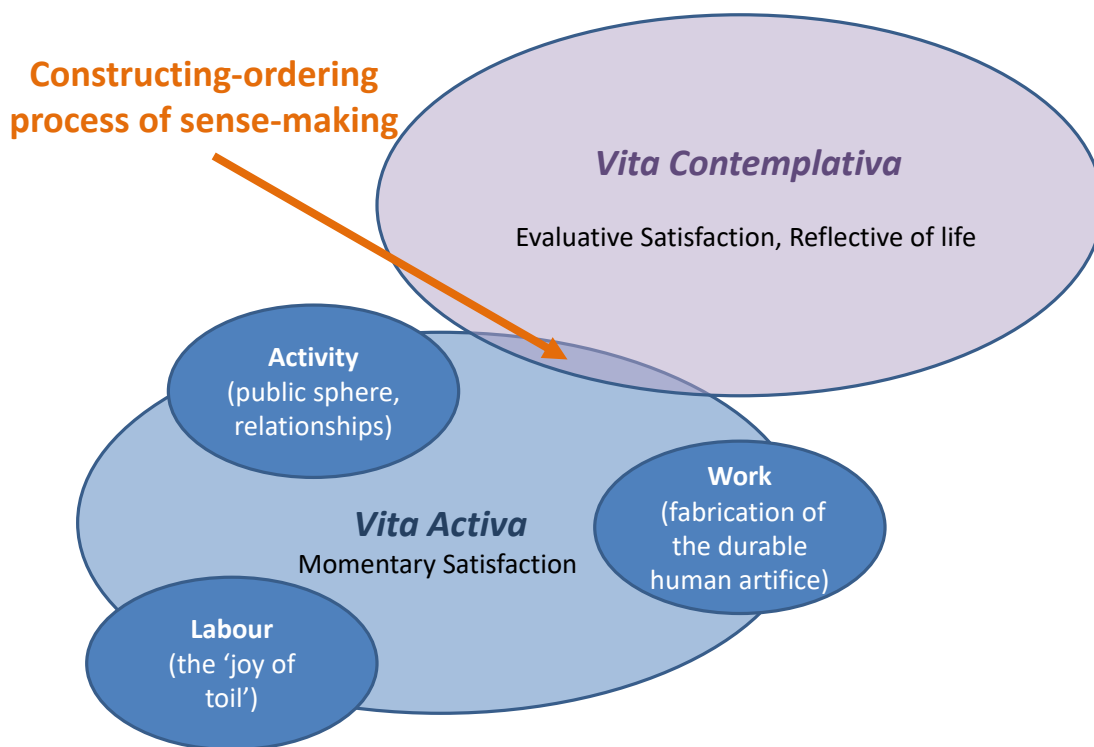
Lesley Brown explains in his foreword to *The Nichomacean Ethics* that: ‘...the most alien aspect of Aristotle’s ethics may be its ultimate elevation ... of the life of philosophical contemplation above any other life, including that of the active citizen who develops and manifests the moral virtues’ (Aristotle, 2009, p.xxiv). So, as Aristotle suggests that a *vita activa* (labour, work, and activity, the aspects that Hannah Arendt would ascribe to it (2000, p.167)) *disturbs* a fulfilling life (‘...action was now reckoned among the necessities of earthly life, so that contemplation ... was left as only the truly free way of life’ (Arendt, 1998, p.14)), he seemingly splits the action-based momentary experience from the overall reflection of it. Thus, Aristotle’s evident approval of the life of philosophical contemplation (the *vita contemplativa*) over the active life (the *vita activa*), including that of work, brought in a philosophical interrogation of my idea of workplace flourishing. One where I was left wondering whether searching for how we can flourish via work was perhaps erroneous?

So, I found it necessary to delve further into this *action-reflection nexus*, by considering Arendt’s thoughtful examination of the *vita activa* and its connection to the *vita contemplativa*. Essentially, Arendt (2000) examines the two terms and their connections historically, attributing characteristics to the three ‘chief human activities’ of the *vita activa* - these being: *labour*, *work* and *activity*. What I found most illuminating in her discussion was how she believes that the three *activa* aspects are supportive of the *vita contemplativa*:

‘For it is in the nature of the human condition that contemplation remains dependent upon all sorts of activities – it depends on labor to produce whatever is necessary to keep the human organism alive, it depends upon work to create whatever is needed to house the human body, and it needs action in order to organize the living together of many human beings in such a way that peace, the condition for the quiet of contemplation is assured.’ (Arendt, 2000, p.167, my emphasis)

I believe she bridges that Aristotelian divide between a *vita activa* and a *vita contemplativa* that Lesley Brown points to. And conceptually, by linking with Csikszentmihalyi's view that: '*Activity and reflection should ideally complement and support each other. Action by itself is blind, reflection impotent*' (2002, p.226), I came to locate (and why I'm telling you all this) where the process of human flourishing takes places is at the interaction of these two lives. The following figure gives my diagrammatic representation of this.

Vita activa-vita contemplativa axis (based on Arendt, 2000):



You might be asking why did I find this important? Well for me, and towards organisational and societal practices, an acknowledgement of this philosophical relationship between them, and their components, helped me to further explain the centrality of work towards flourishing. I conjecture, that without the context of activity from work and the social connections presented there, contemplation alone is abstract, un-rooted, and potentially meaningless. Conversely our momentary activities or experiences cannot be detached from our evaluation or contemplations of work-life as they are informed by it. Raising this ***vita activa-vita contemplativa axis*** essentially underlines how the *constructed sense* of my

workplace flourishing necessarily involves both facets. I also note that there is a strong resonance to the action and reflection cycles in action research.

Annex 5.1. – Organisational Self-Assessment Components

Development area		Core component	Sub-component
1	Institutional development	1. Strategic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership (leadership and decision making) • Strategic thinking • CSO social relevance • Governance • Structure • Financial integration • Niche management¹⁵³
		2. Organisational processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal planning, policy and procedures • Internal problem solving and decision making • Internal communication • Organisational monitoring and evaluation

¹⁵³ In the version prepared for URANUS's OSA the sub-components *CSO social relevance* and *Niche management* were amalgamated, to leave a space for the *Work Enriching Approaches*.

2	Organisational development	3. Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job analysis • HR management • Staffing • Compensation and benefits • Training and development • Performance management • Health and safety • Internal employee relations • Legal aspects
		4. Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial planning/budgeting • Financial accountability • Financial statements and systems • Management accounting
		5. Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities, premises, maintenance, etc. • Technology, equipment, communication equipment
3	Systemic development	6. Inter-institutional linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information/communication networks • Partnership networks
4	Programmatic development	7. Programme management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme planning • Implementation • Assessment

Annex 5.2. – Roughed-out enriching aspects

Aspects of an enriching structure (Adapting McEwen and Schmidt's (2007) headlines as an ordering):

- **Organisational forms** – the design of structures and associated processes would:
 - Underpin organisational values (meaning assessing the effect of structures/processes),¹⁵⁴
 - Emphasise team/project work (as a guiding structure); and
 - Ensures work-life flexibility.¹⁵⁵
- **Positions, placement of right people in right places** - structurally:
 - Job design will emphasise team/project work that promotes and supports learning, innovation, growth and mastery among staff;¹⁵⁶
 - Traditional leadership hierarchies are reduced;¹⁵⁷ and
 - Human resources focus on identifying and then helping people to develop within their organisational setting.
- **Support for decision-making and action** - structures ensures individual and collective decision-making at the appropriate level and place by:¹⁵⁸
 - Using open, transparent and democratic/collective forms;
 - Easing co-operative cross-organisational working;
 - Incorporating flexibility and a light management touch; and
 - Having structures and processes that work from the default position of trust in and responsibility for the employee (self-management).

Aspects of an enriching performance management process (various influences):

- **Focus on future performance**, with a learning/developmental stance (supportive mentoring approach, development goals);

¹⁵⁴ See: Leoncioni, 2002.

¹⁵⁵ See: Burkus, 2016; CMI, 2010; Friedman, 2014, Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014. and Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ See: Hackman & Oldham (1976); Kilfedder & Litchfield, 2014, p.361; and Wilson, Dejoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2004, p.572.

¹⁵⁷ See: Hamel, 2011; Rayasam, 2015a; and Hope, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ See: Gao, Janssen, & Shi, 2011, p.790.

- **Increased frequency** – cadence- of the feedback (regular informal check-ins – short-term goals; and regular reviews);
- **Emphasis on dialogue and conversation** – common explorations of work aims; that includes peers as well as supervisors - to *organically* seek and give feedback;
- **Divide the performance management** into different purposes:
 - Leading: feedback/appraising (leading);
 - Mentoring: learning and development (mentoring); and
 - Managing: (i) promotions/salary/disciplinary and (ii) measure performance team/organisation objectives;
- **Limit administration** and paperwork – a *living* approach; and
- **Connect personal and organisational purposes** (long-term goal/objective setting).¹⁵⁹

The following general pattern matches much of the aspects identified above:

Performance Management Proposition



¹⁵⁹ See Houle & Campbell, 2016; and Kegan, *et. al.*, 2014.

Aspects of enriching leadership:

For an *enriching* manager's values, and thus to types of supervisor behaviour and approaches that enshrine these characteristics, one doesn't have to go much further than these two examples, maybe adding something related to ensuring delegation and devolved decision-making.

O'Toole's questions for an *Aristotelian* manager:

- *'To what extent do I consciously make an effort to provide learning opportunities for everyone who works for me?*
- *To what extent do I encourage full participation by all my people in the decisions affecting their work? To what extent do I allow them to lead in order to grow?*
- *To what extent do I measure my own performance as a manager/leader both in terms of my effectiveness in realizing economic goals and, equally, in terms of using my practical wisdom to create conditions under which my people can seek to fulfill their potential in the workplace?'*
(2005, p.242)

Douglas McGregor's key values of a Theory-Y manager:

- *'Active participation by all involved*
- *A transcending concern with individual dignity, worth, and growth*
- *Reexamination and resolution of the conflict between individual needs and organizational goals¹⁶⁰, through effective interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates*
- *A concept of influence that relies not on coercion, compromise, evasion or avoidance, pseudosupport, or bargaining, but on openness, confrontation, and "working through" differences*
- *A belief that human growth is self-generated and furthered by an environment of trust, feedback, and authentic human relationships.'* (McGregor, 2006, p.xiv)¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ *'...not only is attention to the bottom line and the personal growth of all employees desirable, but the two are interdependent; that both profitability and individual development rely on structures that are built into every aspect of how the company operates...'* Kegan, et. al., 2014.

¹⁶¹ McGregor also gives a list of six assumptions for Theory-Y (2006, p.65-66).

Annex 6.1. – Extended *PPP*: Implications for workplaces

Purpose – *Doing something that we consider worthwhile/meaningful.*

We should be able to locate *Purpose* in our work, as it seems that the developmental journey of identifying and refining what is authentically meaningful to us is a huge part of the sensation of flourishing itself (Fisher, 2014, p.19; Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014; Seligman, 2011; Stewart, 2013). But it is mutable and involves continual personal effort and reflection to be aware of what is of value to us (recall the *Peer realization points*) and to understand our personal work aspirations. It points to an awareness of our career in the long-term. Conversely when what we are doing doesn't help in that ongoing process – for moments and/or over time – then there is a dissonance felt. Also, where our values or purposes are being undermined it would appear to *diminish* our sense of *Purpose* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; O'Toole, 2005).

- *It would mean that work*: needs to facilitate the continual process of personal meaning-making, and we must find virtue in what we do – **Meaningful Work, Living Values.**

Purpose/Place – *Getting confirmation that what we do is positive and useful.*

While developing a sense of *Purpose* for ourselves, it is also confirmed and constructed via our connections through others and society (connected to the action discussion of *vita activa*, see Annex 4.3.). That would seem to indicate that a workplace's purposes and its societal role would influence our own. I feel we gain self-esteem from our work where we gain confirmation of its wider positive value, what Jeffrey *et. al.*, call '*social value*' (2014), and thus supports our meaning-making. This is conditional on our identified values; thus, I would argue necessitates virtue to truly flourish (O'Toole, 2005).

Perhaps this comes from my civil society bias, but whether an organisation can distinguish its value in social terms (stakeholder not shareholder value) and authentically incorporate human values within its organisational approaches seems relevant. An organisation that exhibits demeaning behaviour towards its workforce, society and/or environment, or is inauthentic to its stated values, effectively undermines flourishing (see Feather & Raunter (2004) on organisational citizenship behaviours; and Cameron, Bright, & Caza (2004) on organisational virtuousness and performance). Importantly organisational virtue would appear to be fundamentally related to governance and leadership values exhibited by it (Laloux, 2014).

- *It would mean that work would:* authentically exhibit wider social values as we act. - **Living Values** and have leaders who fundamentally believe in people-centred approaches – **Supervisor Behaviour/Work-Life Choice**.

Place – *Strongly engaged through our work with others.*

This engagement connects to a sense of *Place* in two ways: firstly, relatedness with the *people* of the organisation (rather than wider society as above), the positive connections with work colleagues; and secondly, our sense of *personal* engagement to the workplace; feeling at home.

The *People-Place* aspect has strongly come out as an *enriching* part of work (Dejours & Deranty, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and stems from a need for connection and inclusiveness (where much teamwork development lies). I've mentioned the potential for organisational processes and structures to undermine relatedness (Section 5.3.), which would further suggest the need to assess organisational practices in this light (Verhezen, 2010). It also explains how much of the damage of toxic leadership or office politics, causing low levels of relatedness, and ultimately a *diminishing* workplace happens. The *Personal-Place* aspect here, while connecting with *Purpose/Place* above, seems to be linked rather with the influence of organisational conditions, such as fairness and treatment, and physical environment and infrastructure.

- *It would mean that work would:* actively ensure the development of connections and healthy relations between colleagues and stakeholders – **Relatedness**; and strives for catholic levels of fairness, equity, balance, and transparency – **Solidarity**.

Place/Practice – *Getting confirmation that what we do is done well.*

There appears to be a requirement that for us to flourish we need confirmation that what we do we are doing well. It has connections with achievement and progress in our work but includes both internal and external validation of that work. I certainly need feedback and approbation from my work to feel personally and professionally respected. Although I know the final arbiter, biggest critic, and thus the source of my own flourishing is myself. This speaks to the constructed nature of our professional and personal evaluations of our performance of work; in the moment and over time.

As this has connections to how we work with others, and the feedback that comes from that real time, there are also engagement and personal task control links here. Thus, links with organisational or task

freedoms and to our own abilities - mastery (Pink, 2011) - are made. Indeed, I feel much of the current interest in self-managed teams originates in this *People-Place/Practice* axis (Laloux, 2014).

Organisationally performance management, appraisal approaches and mentoring appear related to this. With clear connections to the feedback, development and coaching function of managers. Plus, that work between colleagues exhibits open and genuine communication, and there is a healthy connection with stakeholders (Handy, 1990, 1999; McGregor, 2006; Robertson & Barling, 2014). How organisations react to failure might be an indicator of this. While others would be: work overload, ineffective meetings, and task isolation; thus, illustrating an inability to control our work effectively.

- *It would mean that work would:* have a personnel developmental/mentoring focus from management - **Supervisor behaviour**; ensure openness and teamwork between colleagues – **Relatedness**; allow appropriate levels of decision-making for work implementation – **Subsidiarity**; and give suitable job/task control - **Self-Direction**.

Practice – Feeling strongly or vibrantly engaged with our activity.

To me, while associated with development, growth and learning, there were aspects of workplace flourishing that were evidently linked to a momentary exhibition of competence, leading to achievement, and completion of work tasks. These were more *‘flow like’* (Csikszentmihaly, 2002) in their qualities than the overall personal sense of growth. They were about using our skills to good effect, within our own direction, and testing our professional abilities. In other words: competence, autonomy and mastery. Negatively this was linked to feelings of failure and a sense of being unproductive.

The *Peers* didn’t say much about how we foster our own practice abilities, but rather about the conditions or options that enable us to use them. Thus, principles related to work management were raised by us - in positive and negative forms - such as: freedom of choice, appropriate levels of autonomy and decision-taking, and consultation from leaders.

Workplace administrative culture was seen to be an important aspect. So, where administration was, either culturally or structurally, inflexible, unresponsive, or malignant, it had a significant *diminishing* effect. But where enlightened processes and structures and attitudes prevailed the opposite reigned; a notable interface of process/structure and culture/values. Additionally, our connection with our work, and its vibrancy, seemed to be linked to its variety and the continual development of the task or skill involved. Thus, repetitiveness and lack of novelty were cited as *diminishing* to our sense of engagement.

- *It would mean that work would:* foster continual skill-proving, progression and variety – **Self-direction/Growth and development**; and set decision-making and choice-taking at appropriate levels – **Subsidiarity**.

Practice/Purpose – Having a sense of learning, development, or progression

A fundamental part of our workplace flourishing was that sense of learning and growth and development that good work gave us. I think that for me to feel that I am learning and developing is a fundamental part of who I am. If that is going positively I feel I am flourishing. I think that it is through this sense or assessment of our development that we feel the ordering of our lives (perhaps good functioning (Fisher, 2014)). For the *Peers* too, the process of developing themselves and being creative, deepening their mastery, was apparently a key element in their workplace flourishing. Where we felt constrained or undermined in that - or had to do work that was uninteresting or simply useless - we exhibited a discord with our work (Kilfedder & Litchfield, 2014).

There is seemingly a linkage with the longer-term assessment we make of our development. It does not appear that we are only satisfied with being busy on a day-to-day basis - ticking things off our 'to-do-lists' - there is an element of *Purpose* required in our *Practice*. I note that where I cannot connect to my work or the task being done, then I am less than enthralled by it and have to search for some learning within it. It circulates to finding value and meaning in what we do.

- *It would mean that work would:* support peoples' ongoing personal development, learning or progression - **Growth and development**; provide feelings of success or completion on a regular basis - **Meaningful work**; and provide a culture of reflection and learning – **Supervisor Behaviour**.
